Further **E**ducation **W**omen Leaders: Why So Few?

An Exploration of White and BME Women's Experiences as Leaders in the Further Education Sector

By

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ABSTRACT

The Further and Higher Education Act 1992 reconstituted English Further Education colleges as incorporated institutions. This led colleges to restructure their governing bodies and leadership teams, introducing managerialist practices and embedding a marketised culture.

Despite forming the majority within college workforces, women have long been under-represented within senior leadership and amongst the cohort of principals. This qualitative study gives voice to a mix of white and BME women who offer insights into their experiences as holders of college senior leadership posts. The findings contribute to understandings about women's choice of Further Education as a career and expose the barriers participants faced and the support which sustained them in different phases of their purposeful engagement with leadership transition. The study adds to leadership theory by depicting a summary of responses to these experiences and may interest other researchers in the field of leadership development. Additionally, it may be of value to policy makers and practitioners who seek to promote a more inclusive leadership discourse in the learning and skills sector in a context where a re-launch of national leadership development initiatives is taking place.

DEDICATION

For Courtney Walker, to inspire her to achieve her full potential

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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List of Abbreviations

BEd	Bachelor of Education
BLI	Black Leadership Initiative
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
CEL	Centre for Excellence in Leadership
Cert Ed	Certificate in Education
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
FE	Further Education
FEFC	Further Education Funding Council
HR	Human Resources
LLSC	Local Learning and Skills Council
LLUK	Lifelong Learning UK
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
LSIS	Learning and Skills Improvement Service
NHS	National Health Service
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
SFA	Skills Funding Agency
SMT	Senior Management Team
730	City and Guilds Certificate 730:Teaching in Further Education

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

> I may be accused of arrogance; still I must declare what I firmly
> believe, that all writers who have written on the subject of female
> education…have contributed to render women more artificial, weak
> characters than they would otherwise have been: and consequently
> more useless members of society… My objection extends to the
> whole purport of those books, which tend, in my opinion, to degrade
> one half of the human species, and render women pleasing at the
> expense of every solid virtue (Mary Wollstonecraft, 1792 p7).

Women form the majority of teachers in the United Kingdom (UK) but hold a

minority of leadership positions except for the primary school sector, becoming

less likely to achieve leadership positions the older their students (Coleman,

2002). Within both schools and Further Education (FE) colleges, black and

minority ethnic (BME) women have been significantly under-represented in

leadership where the barriers for BME women are compounded by their

double minority status (Commission for Black Staff in Further Education, 2002;

Page, 2003). Twenty years after colleges were incorporated it remains the

case that women from all backgrounds are under-represented within the

cohort of college principals (Women's Leadership Network, 2012). This study

explores the experiences of some white and BME women who challenged the

male leadership orthodoxy which became embedded in FE (Kerfoot and

Whitehead, 1998) and progressed to senior leadership. In so doing, it

responds to Wollstonecraft (1792) in revealing their strengths in dealing with

the challenges and barriers they encountered.

> To subscribe to the educational ideal of tolerance and
> multiculturalism is not a matter of mere preference… but a decision
> grounded in the firm foundation of a universalist core of rationality
> that we must admit to sharing. Insight into, and acknowledgement

of, this transcendental principle legitimates educational goals and practices (Vleighe, 2010 p158).

Findings from this study could contribute towards promoting more inclusive leadership discourses relating to college leadership.

1.1 CONTEXT FOR THE RESEARCH

1.1.1 Introduction

FE colleges, which are located in the learning and skills sector within UK educational structures, are important for several reasons. Firstly, the government views the sector as 'of strategic importance for the purposes of skills development to serve the UK economy and promote social inclusion' (Jameson, 2008 p6). Over 4.5 million people undertake FE programmes annually (Lifelong Learning UK, 2008a), of whom 3.16 million are adult learners (Skills Funding Agency, 2012a). Secondly, £3.64 billion is being spent in 2012-13 to fund FE colleges (Skills Funding Agency, 2012a) and over 260,000 staff are employed in the sector (Lifelong Learning UK, 2008a, 2011a). Women have consistently comprised almost two-thirds of this workforce (Further Education Development Agency, 1997; Lifelong Learning UK, 2011a).

1.1.2 Incorporation of colleges

The Further and Higher Education Act 1992 brought about the separation of colleges from local authority control and their incorporation as independent bodies with a remit to develop and deliver post-16 education and training. Incorporation coincided with severe funding cuts which reduced the amount

which colleges received for a full time student or equivalent by over 20% in the five years after incorporation (Simmons, 2008). 'Financial pressures were the most important reason for colleges changing their organisational structure and were a strong element in decisions about the content of strategic change' (Hannagan, 2006 p329). Whilst Ouston (1999) proposed the 'need to disentangle causes from effects' (p168), Simmons (2008) opined that it was difficult to separate the effects of the cuts from the impact of incorporation. The combination of incorporation and funding cuts significantly changed the roles of both governing boards and leadership teams (Ainley and Bailey, 1997). Governors and leaders had to oversee major new areas of responsibility including financial control, strategic planning, human resources and estates management (Ainley and Bailey, 1997; Randle and Brady, 1997; Lumby, 2003). A discourse of managerialism led to the adoption of titles such as chief executive, senior manager and middle manager (Ainley and Bailey, 1997; Randle and Brady, 1997). A college's success after the transition to incorporation was attributed to 'the principal's capacity to…understand the environment…and adapt to the dramatic change in roles' (Hannagan, 2006 p333). The world of FE thereby 'became one of diktat and discipline, performativity and managerialism' (Simmons, 2008 p360) which is continued by the current funding body which recently refused to fund numerous extant qualifications (Skills Funding Agency, 2012b). Mergers and restructures meant that the number of colleges dropped from over 400 in 2007-08 (Lifelong Learning 2008a) to 220 in 2012 (Skills Funding Agency, 2012a). However, 'discourses of leadership in the changing policy context of the English further

education sector…remained a largely neglected territory' (Gleeson, 2001 p181).

1.2 COLLEGE LEADERSHIP

1.2.1 Introduction

Inequalities in terms of both gender and race/ethnicity in college leadership have long been highlighted as significant causes for concern (Wild, 1994; Cole, 2000; Commission for Black Staff in Further Education, 2002; Women's Leadership Network, 2009, 2012). Incorporation created new opportunities which enabled some mainly white women to progress to leadership positions (Cole, 2000; Shain, 2000) but there were concerns that institutional racism within FE was preventing talented BME staff from making similar advances (Commission for Black Staff in Further Education, 2002). At the same time, Frearson's (2003) findings that almost half the senior managers were due to retire between 2007 and 2012 highlighted the need for the sector to develop its leadership and succession strategy. Further, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) expressed concern that 'it is becoming increasingly difficult to attract and retain talented people for leadership positions at all levels' (DfES and Centre for Excellence in Leadership, 2003 p6) in FE, whilst Lifelong Learning UK argued:

> The diversity profile of the workforce needs to be representative of the learners and communities it serves…particularly in senior management and leadership' (Lifelong Learning UK, 2009c p9).

The issue of diversity in college leadership lies at the heart of this study, underpinned by the tenet that 'gender identities are not homogenous and intertwine with other identities, notably ethnic considerations' (Basit, 2012

p407). Whereas Hall (1997) proposed a 'triple metaphor: power, culture, gender' (p312) this study proposes a quadruple metaphor – power, culture, gender and race/ethnicity.

1.2.2 Gender inequalities in college leadership

In 1990 only 3% of college principals were women (Wild, 1994), yet at incorporation women formed 63% of the FE workforce and outnumbered men in all areas of teaching and administration (Lifelong Learning UK, 2008a). There was a 32% turnover of principals between 1993 and 1996 (Further Education Funding Council, 1998) and the proportion of women principals increased to 17% (81 women) by 1997 (Cole, 2000). However, 'leaders and senior managers in the learning and skills sector remained predominantly white, middle aged and male' (DfES and Centre for Excellence in Leadership, 2003 p25). Women remained under-represented and by 2012 women held only 38% of principals' posts (Women's Leadership Network, 2012).

Although the number of female middle managers rose progressively from 2003 to 2010, this rise was less evident in senior management. Data analysing the gender of members of senior management teams began to be collected in 2007-08. These data revealed that by 2010, when 45% of managers were women, men were twice as likely as women to progress to senior management, despite women's continued high (64%) representation in the workforce (Lifelong Learning UK, 2006, 2008b, 2011b). It is worth noting that these new data were analysed separately by race/ethnicity and by gender and

it is not possible to identify how many BME women held senior leadership positions (Lifelong Learning UK, 2008b, 2009b, 2011b).

1.2.3 Race and ethnic inequalities in college leadership

Whilst 16.8% of learners in the FE sector in 2006-07 were from BME backgrounds, 'BME staff were significantly under-represented in comparison' (Lifelong Learning UK, 2008b p7), comprising 7.7% of the workforce. Further, 'since 2004-05 there has been a fall in the percentage of staff from black and minority ethnic groups in managerial roles' (Lifelong Learning UK, 2008b p7) although the proportion of BME staff has risen to 8.5% of the workforce (Lifelong Learning UK, 2011b). None of the literature suggested any BME women amongst the pre-incorporation group of women principals (Commission for Black Staff in Further Education, 2002) although my research led me to discover one black female principal in the 1980s.

The Commission for Black Staff in Further Education (2002) critiqued the absence of reliable information relating to BME staff in leadership positions. Subsequent research revealed that only 2% of the 12,000 college leaders and managers were BME people, with an almost equal split between women and men (Network for Black Managers, 2005a). Almost half of these BME leaders were in London colleges whilst several English regions had none (Network for Black Managers, 2005a). The Commission for Black Staff in Further Education (2002) reported that 'only 1% of colleges currently have a black principal, representing four out of 412' (p11) and noted that the first BME woman principal was appointed in 2001. This discrepancy serves to illustrate the

invisibility of BME women leaders in FE sector data. Further, the Office for

Standards in Education (Ofsted) reported that none of the 41 colleges they

surveyed in 2005 had a staffing profile which matched the ethnic profile of the

local population (Ofsted, 2005). The Black Leadership Initiative (BLI) was

introduced to support BME staff who aspired to FE leadership, and although

the proportion of BME male and female senior leaders rose to 3.4% by 2007-

08 (Lifelong Learning UK, 2008b), there were only nine BME women

principals in 2011 (Network for Black Professionals, 2011). These various

data, revealing issues of both race/ethnic and gender under-representation in

college leadership help to justify this study.

1.3 LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The pressures of marketisation and the increasing demands of funding bodies

led to a significant drop in applications for vacancies which, together with the

ageing profile of college leaders, created national concern (DfES and Centre

for Excellence in Leadership, 2003). Additionally, the Commission for Black

Staff in Further Education (2002) explored the barriers faced by BME staff in

progressing towards college leadership and made recommendations which

could increase opportunities for aspiring BME leaders. In response to all this,

the DfES established a new Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL) for FE

in 2003. Its remit was:

> To actively develop potential,…to convince junior and middle
> managers - particularly those from groups under-represented in
> senior management posts - that senior management roles are worth
> striving for,…and to attract and recruit potential successors from
> outside the sector (DfES and Centre for Excellence in Leadership,
> 2003 p6).

The DfES response might be construed as pragmatic rather than ideological because the initiative was linked to demographic issues surrounding college leaders, but it nevertheless gave greater focus to the roles played by under-represented groups in college leadership. There was early controversy relating to the proposed leadership training, because whilst modules embraced finance, staffing, estates and management skills, there was little reference to equality and diversity issues in the proposed training packages (DfES and Centre for Excellence in Leadership, 2003). This meant that the BLI, offering training, mentoring, work shadowing and support for aspiring BME leaders, ran separately (Kenny, 2004). In 2005, CEL invited the BLI to run its project as an additional strand of CEL's portfolio of training but this lasted only until 2007 when the BLI left CEL to become part of the Network for Black Professionals (formerly Network for Black Managers), although CEL continued to provide financial support for BLI programmes. These developments illustrate the difficulties encountered in placing race equality centrally on the agenda of mainstream FE. This context of gender and race/ethnic under-representation in college leadership underpins the conceptualisation of this research.

1.4 RESEARCH AIMS

1.4.1 Research problem

It is widely acknowledged that the FE sector has been under-researched (Gleeson and Shain, 1999; Gleeson, 2001; Watson and Crossley, 2001; Martinez 2003; Muijs et al, 2006) and this study aims to contribute to the growing literature relating to the sector. The key research problem lies in the

fact that, whilst women comprise almost two-thirds of the FE workforce, they have traditionally been employed in the lower echelons (Lifelong Learning UK, 2006, 2009b, 2011a) and despite some advances, women remain under-represented amongst principals and senior leaders (Women's Leadership Network, 2012). This study seeks to explore the barriers and challenges encountered by aspiring women leaders in FE and the sources of support which sustained them. In so doing, the study seeks to develop a pluralism and fluidity of thought which connects women leaders from different racial/ethnic backgrounds rather than organising itself through dichotomies which separate BME and white women and re-enforce dualities (Usher, 1996a). This work challenges leadership orthodoxy based on white masculinist norms (Gunter, 2006), giving voice to some of the white and BME women who have successfully progressed to senior leadership within FE, including women who became leaders in the aftermath of incorporation and women who entered the sector more recently.

> There is an assumption that…leadership is context free…but research on gender issues…shows that this is not the case, and so the leader-centric nature of much epistemic underpinning of research and theorising needs to be examined and critiqued (Gunter, 2006 p210).

The research adopts an approach which 'enables the integrative construction of historical transcription (events, facts, people) with the explanatory rigour of theories of power (agency and structure)' (Gunter, 2006 p211). It explores why participants chose to develop careers within FE and their experiences as they progressed on their journeys towards leadership. Much of the literature focuses on discrete barriers such as managerialism (Gleeson and Shain, 1999; Ball, 2008), sexism (Kerfoot and Whitehead, 1998; Cole, 2000), family

responsibilities (Evetts, 1990; Gronn, 1999a) or racism (Commission for Black Staff in Further Education, 2002; Mackay and Etienne, 2006; Sargeant, 2007). I aimed to explore the collective impact of all barriers identified by participants as having impeded their career progression alongside the support which they assessed as valuable to them, exposing their impact at different stages in their careers. In so doing, I wanted to unite the experiences of white and BME women leaders within an inclusive discourse without denying the 'complexities, contingencies and contradictions of racism' (Connolly, 1998 p3). Further, the study explores whether the experiences of white women leaders in FE reflected those of their counterparts in schools (Hall, 1996) and whether the experiences of BME women in FE reflected those of their counterparts in business (Davidson, 1997). The findings can contribute towards embedding diversity into FE leadership discourses amongst researchers, policy makers and practitioners. The research is constructed around five research questions which provide opportunities to gain insights into participants' experiences within a heuristic framework relating to career (Gronn and Ribbins, 1996).

1.4.2 Research questions

The research aims led me to ask:

1. What were the factors which influenced the participants' early ambitions and why did they choose to work within the FE sector?

This question relates to the formation phase of career (Gronn and Ribbins, 1996) and explores influences on early career choices and how participants came to work in FE.

2. How do participants construct the notion of a career in FE in relation to their own biographies and what factors have inhibited or supported career development?

This question explores participants' understandings of career and their approaches to career development. I wanted to identify the barriers and challenges they faced and the sources of support which sustained them as leaders in FE, and to understand whether these changed as the number of women leaders increased.

3. What strategies and tactics did participants adopt in engaging with the organisational culture within FE?

This question relates to the accession and incumbency phases of career (Gronn and Ribbins, 1996) which for this study equates with progressing to FE leadership. 'The FE sector has seen the impact of new managerialism to a greater extent than any other sector of education' (Lambert, 2011 p133) and this question explores how participants experienced and responded to managerialist culture.

4. How do the participants report their experiences of leadership within the organisational culture within FE, and how do these experiences relate to academic theories of leadership?

This question aims to explore participants' approaches to and understandings of leadership in the incumbency phase of their careers (Gronn and Ribbins, 1996) including their experiences of leadership training, and to compare these with the literature.

5. What were the consequences for participants of their experience of and engagement with the organisational culture within FE?

This question relates to the divestiture phase of career (Gronn and Ribbins, 1996) and explores the impact of participants' experiences as leaders in FE on their future career ambitions.

1.5 RESEARCH STRATEGY

The research is located within the qualitative paradigm and consists of a survey of white and BME women holding senior leadership posts in colleges, whose experiences are explored through their narrated life stories. The realities which participants revealed are based on their own understandings and interpretations so the knowledge arising from the study is subjectivist (Pring, 2000). A postal questionnaire sent to all West Midlands FE colleges provided contextual information about women's representation within senior leadership at the start of the study and helped to locate potential participants. Semi-structured interviews conducted with eleven white and five BME women, who detailed their experiences linked to career phases (Gronn and Ribbins, 1996), led to a thematic approach to the analysis and presentation of findings. However, whilst this thematic approach promotes an inclusive discourse based on commonality of experience, the interviews allowed for individual differences in both experiences and responses, whilst a hermeneutic approach (Erben, 1996) afforded flexibility and contributed to trustworthiness.

The study supports Kohli's (2009) promotion of women's voices to assert the importance of issues such as race/ethnicity and gender within leadership

discourses, seeking to embed voices of 'travellers in the field of…educational leadership' (Gunter and Ribbins, 2002 p410) into the research map. My biography as a white woman with senior leadership experience in FE underpinned the decision to undertake this study. The implications of my status as insider in terms of gender and biography and part insider part outsider in relation to race/ethnicity are acknowledged and discussed in Chapter Three. I wanted better to understand the theoretical concepts relating to leadership and how they relate to gender and race/ethnicity within college leadership.

1.6 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

This first chapter introduces the research and has set the scene for the remaining chapters. Chapter Two reviews the literature, beginning with the policy context of FE since incorporation and the impact of managerialism on college leadership. This chapter next explores theoretical understandings of gender and racial/ethnic identities, and then moves on to explore understandings of educational leadership and leadership development in the context of FE. Chapter Three sets out the theoretical basis on which this study has been constructed and locates the study paradigmatically. This chapter includes the research methodology, giving an account of the epistemological basis on which the study rests and offering a justification for the heuristic framework of career (Gronn and Ribbins, 1996) which supports the analysis. Chapter Three also more fully delineates the research questions, details and justifies the research methods adopted in the study, and sets out ethical considerations. Chapter Four presents findings from the research,

linked to participants' leadership journeys within the heuristic framework of career. In so doing and in line with the research aims, the findings seek to create an inclusive discourse within which white and BME participants are given voice. Chapter Five sets the findings in conversation with the literature to identify areas where the findings align to the literature and areas where the findings offer new insights into women's leadership experiences within FE. Finally, Chapter Six offers conclusions arising from the research, setting out the contribution to knowledge to which this study makes claim. This chapter also identifies issues arising from the study both in terms of policy and in terms of further research and considers the extent to which the aims of the research have been achieved.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter critically evaluates key literature relating to the themes in the research questions so as to justify the research. Hall's (1996) study of the career paths of six white women head teachers offered a model for this work, whilst Davidson's (1997) exploration of the experiences of BME women managers in business provided valuable insights which complemented the small body of literature depicting BME women's experiences in FE. Ongoing engagement with key journals such as *Educational Management, Administration and Leadership, Journal of Further and Higher Education, Gender and Education,* and *Race, Ethnicity and Education* helped to identify important resources, and articles were used to signpost towards further texts and authors. I undertook regular library and e-library searches and, using key words such as *leadership, further education, diversity*, *gender* and *race/ethnicity*, found additional resources using Google Scholar. My knowledge of FE helped me to source policy documents from key agencies including Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL), DfES, Further Education Funding Council (FEFC), Learning and Skills Council (LSC), Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS), Lifelong Learning UK, Skills Funding Agency and Ofsted. I also attended some useful lectures and conferences. Inevitably, choices have been made regarding the inclusion or exclusion of material, but these choices were made within the overall aim of ensuring that the literature review is both balanced in content and broad in scope.

The chapter is divided into four main sections linked to themes and concepts arising from the research questions. The first section explores the structure, organisation and culture of the post-incorporation FE sector. Having set this context, the second main section explores understandings of identities in terms of gender and race/ethnicity and considers the intersectionality of gender and race/ethnicity for BME women.

The chapter then moves on to explore theoretical models and understandings of educational leadership and offers a critique of normative approaches to leadership development, proposing a more contextual approach underpinned by principles of inclusion which embed diversity into leading and leadership. The final main section evaluates the literature relating to women's careers, identifying factors which support progression towards leadership and barriers which inhibit such progression. Finally, these key themes and concepts are summarised to delineate the analytical framework within which participants' stories can be interpreted and understood.

2.1 STRUCTURE AND ORGANISATION OF THE FE SECTOR

2.1.1 Incorporation

Colleges were removed from local authority control to become independent incorporated institutions under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. Incorporation introduced new governance arrangements and changed management structures (Ainley and Bailey, 1997; Randle and Brady, 1997), 'encouraging and requiring participants to behave like businesses' (Strain and Simkins, 2008 p156).

2.1.2 Impact of incorporation on college governing bodies

Governing bodies became responsible for 'the assets, the staff and the management of their colleges' (Ainley and Bailey, 1997 p14) and were reconstituted as corporations to reflect these new responsibilities. Prior to incorporation, governors were a mix of elected local authority representatives, local community representatives and members of local business, voluntary and statutory agencies (Ainley and Bailey, 1997) who had little involvement with financial matters which were the responsibility of each local authority. The Further and Higher Education Act 1992 prescribed a quota of new governors to be appointed from business, with a remit to 'recreate accountability' (Ainley and Bailey, 1997 p39) in the absence of elected representatives and to oversee delivery of the 'more for less' (p61) policy which underpinned the changes. Cole (2000) opined that the reduction in local authority and community governors 'would seem likely to cause the number of women and ethnic minority... governors to decline' (p209). Governors, charged with responsibilities resonant of private sector business, organised themselves like private sector boards (Ainley and Bailey, 1997). Notwithstanding their voluntary capacity, they were subject to FEFC control and removal (Withers, 2000).

A feature of college structures is that, whilst principals are generally responsible for appointing staff, governors appoint principals and other senior postholders, who can be removed by governors or by the funding body. Relationships between governors and senior postholders are important for both institutional and individual success (Withers, 2000 p380), and the

business ethos which underpinned strategic decision-making led to new politicised relationships between governors and leaders (Ainley and Bailey, 1997). Withers (2000) found a massive shift from the pre-incorporation educational discourse to one where 'finance, and the management and deployment of it…was a major determinant of life in each college' (p375). Principals adopted political strategies such as 'preparing the ground before meetings, rehearsing and picking off influential members, using the chair of the board to tip them the wink' (Ainley and Bailey, 1997 p39) to secure governor support. These masculinist behavioural traits supported the male orthodoxy surrounding principalship and marginalised women (Kerfoot and Whitehead, 1998; Leonard, 1998; Cole, 2000; Ball, 2008). Findings detailed in Chapter Four demonstrate the impact of these practices on participants' experiences as leaders. Given governors' responsibilities for appointing senior postholders, and the predominantly white male profile of principals (Network for Black Professionals, 2010; Women's Leadership Network, 2012), it is important to explore the composition of governing bodies in terms of race/ethnicity and gender. This can be contextualised in terms of how representative governing bodies are of the UK population and of college staff and students.

2.1.3 Composition of governing bodies by race/ethnicity

In the absence of any data, the Commission for Black Staff in Further Education (2002) commissioned a survey to establish the racial/ethnic profile of governing bodies in English FE colleges. For completeness, information about the wider context of the Commission's work is included in Appendix 1

(page 253). The survey found that across 389 respondent colleges, 68% (267) had no BME governors whilst overall, BME governors held 7.3% (521) of governor places (Network for Black Managers, 2005b). This was 1.7% below the representation of BME people in the UK population and significantly below the 17% of BME students in colleges (Network for Black Managers, 2005b). Importantly, BME governors tended not to be from business or influential local groups but were either staff or student governors, and very few held influential roles such as corporation or committee chair (Network for Black Professionals, 2008).

Ofsted (2005) surveyed 41 colleges and found that 17 (42%) had no BME governors and 'not all governors were fully appraised of their responsibilities' (p4) with regard to racial diversity. Ofsted (2005) urged the LSC to 'identify and support strategies for encouraging more BME people to become college governors' (p5). Findings presented in Chapter Four suggest that these recommendations have not been systematically pursued. Ofsted's role in conducting college inspections includes an assessment of equality and diversity at all levels (Ofsted, 2009) which for completeness is detailed in Appendix 2 (page 256). However, Ofsted does not interpret this to include the production of data sets analysing the race/ethnicity or gender of governing bodies.

A 2008 survey carried out by CEL (Lifelong Learning UK, 2008b) produced responses from only 13% of governors, of whom 9.5% were BME. This was slightly higher than the 9% in the national population (Office for National

Statistics, 2001) but still well below the 17% BME student population (Network for Black Managers, 2005b). Because the response rate was so low, it is not safe to draw conclusions from these data, and the low response rate may in itself indicate the low priority given by some colleges to the inclusion of BME voices in their governance. CEL also found that in all but two regions the proportion of BME governors was significantly lower than the proportion of BME students in those regions (Lifelong Learning UK, 2008b). Later research in the eastern region of England found that 91% of governors were white and any BME governors were predominantly students (Godbold Consultancy, 2011). None of these data analyse the cohort of BME governors by gender. The next section explores what is known about the gender composition of governing bodies.

2.1.4 Composition of governing bodies by gender

The gender of governors is an important diversity issue given that, although women form 64% of the FE sector workforce (Lifelong Learning UK, 2008a) and 59% of the student body (Learning and Skills Council, 2007), governors have appointed a predominantly male cohort of principals (Frearson, 2003; Women's Leadership Network, 2012). Because the LSC did not collect information about the gender of governors, Lifelong Learning UK (2008a) was able to analyse gender using only the data relating to the 13% of governors who responded to the CEL survey. This revealed that 34.5% of these governors were women, but as these data related to such a small proportion of governors they could not be regarded as representative. Subsequent research found that, whilst women held 33% of governor places in colleges in

eastern England, most female governors were staff, students or parents (Godbold Consultancy, 2011). A recent survey conducted by the Women's Leadership Network (2013) received responses from 81 colleges which all reported having more than twice as many male governors as female governors.

2.1.5 Summarising governance issues

Research highlights that the majority of governors are male and many colleges have no BME governors (Network for Black Managers, 2005b; Ofsted, 2005; Lifelong Learning UK, 2008a; Women's Leadership Network, 2013). Governing bodies do not reflect either college staff (Lifelong Learning UK, 2008a) or student populations (Learning and Skills Council, 2007) and have not been the subject of regular review (Learning and Skills Improvement Service, 2009). Lack of governor diversity exposes a risk that, when appointing senior postholders, governors may fail to 'break the normalised principal identity' (Blackmore et al, 2006 p315) because of a 'cultural bias towards leadership by males' (Beare et al, 1997 p35). The absence of a governor focus on diversity can contribute to the isolation of white and BME women leaders, as demonstrated in Chapter Four when participants reflect on their experiences of working with mainly white male governors. In the schools sector, BME staff reported discriminatory attitudes by governors who 'were unwilling to deviate from the "normal" pattern of appointment' (Coleman and Campbell-Stephens, 2010 p44). Fuller's (2009) call for 'further equal opportunities training for school governing bodies whose members make up selection panels' (p30) could extend to FE. Twelve modules of FE governor training materials have recently been developed by the Learning and Skills

Improvement Service (2012), and although one module contains a short

section detailing equal opportunities legislation, the materials overlook the

opportunity to embed best practice.   Alongside changes in governance,

incorporation also brought about significant changes in college management,

introducing a business ethic similar to that which inculcated governance

(Withers, 2000). The impact of these changes is next explored.

2.1.6 Marketisation and managerialism

The FEFC introduced annual contracts with colleges, embedding a marketised

environment where performance measures and targets dominated leadership

agendas (Further Education Funding Council, 1992) and where business

management theory predominated (Bottery, 1992). The former public service

ethic to provide quality educational opportunities on which college lecturers

built their professionalism (Dearing, 1994) was replaced by a managerialist

culture 'which serves to reinforce and validate many male managers' sense of

being masculine and men' (Shain, 2000 p218).

> The new managerialism …included:
> ❑　　Strict financial management and devolved budgetary controls
> ❑　　The efficient use of resources and an emphasis on productivity
> ❑　　The extensive use of quantitative performance indicators
> ❑　　The development of consumerism and the discipline of the market
> ❑　　The manifestation of consumer charters as mechanisms for accountability
> ❑　　The creation of a flexible workforce, using flexible/individualized contracts, appraisal systems and performance related pay
> ❑　　The assertion of 'the managers' right to manage' (Randle and Brady, 1997 p30).

Whereas 'leadership is doing the right things, management is doing things right' (Bennis and Nanus, 1985 cited in Jameson, 2008 p8). Managerialism became a central theme of the marketisation at the heart of the business model introduced into FE.

> Managerialism is characterised by commitment to the over-riding values and mission of a particular organisation, …and by decision making based on discretion entrusted to those who hold clearly identified managerial roles and authority, …and may also imply disempowerment of other groups (Simkins, 2000 p321).

Managerialism, which implies a model of distributed leadership based on structuralist assumptions of normative management techniques, is contested by Bottery (1992) who argues that 'the whole aims-and-objectives movement may be incorrect for education' (p123). 'Any simplistic notion of the influence of marketisation should be rejected' (Newman and Jadhi, 2009 p1) because managerialism is based on economic rationalism with ulterior motives, namely the desire to exercise control over professionals (Shain and Gleeson, 1999). Many managers and lecturers abandoned ambition for career progression within this new culture (Randle and Brady, 1997; Watson and Crossley, 2001).

Responsibility for the FE sector was centrally transferred from the Department for Education and Skills to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, further demonstrating the embedded business ethic. The FEFC was replaced in 2001 by the LSC which established a web of nine regional offices and 47 local Learning and Skills Councils to exercise even greater control over colleges through close and frequent monitoring (Learning and Skills Council, 2009). In 2010, the LSC was replaced by yet another overseeing authority, the Skills Funding Agency (SFA). Notably, any reference to learning was

omitted from this new body's title. The next section explores the impact of managerialism on college leadership.

2.1.7 Changes in college leadership and management

Colleges were required to produce a range of formal management provisions including strategic plans, business plans, charters, and targets for efficiency and effectiveness (Randle and Brady, 1997; Simkins, 2000). Whereas local authorities had previously been responsible for accountancy, marketing, personnel and information systems, principals now included such specialists, often with no background in education, within their leadership teams (Ainley and Bailey, 1997). Recruitment and selection practices, critiqued as 'discriminatory or socially exclusive' by the Commission for Black Staff in Further Education (2002 p21), were frequently not formalised. Such was the pace of change that two thirds of principals left their colleges shortly after incorporation (Ainley and Bailey, 1997).

Inevitably, the arrival of a new cohort of specialist leaders and managers engendered a massive change in the culture of college leadership (Leader, 2004). 'The new business entails an individual who is enterprising and empowered through a subjectivity that responds flexibly to changing environments and customer demands' (Popkewitz, 1999 p36). The orthodoxy of college leadership was white and male, with evidence of outright hostility to aspiring women leaders (Cole, 2000). Even though men comprised 83% of

principals, two male principals expressed concerns that there were 'too few men…which could lead to a shortage of role models for male students' (Cole, 2000 p213). Kerfoot and Whitehead (1998) interviewed 24 male senior leaders after incorporation and found that they 'took to aping what they considered were the everyday practices of business and commerce' (p438), creating 'a "boys own" culture framed in Darwinian narratives of survival and aggression, competition and combativeness' (p443). A study of eight male principals conducted three years after incorporation revealed that some were holding on to their pre- incorporation values of 'providing a service to educate students' (Lumby and Tomlinson, 2000 p141), although they accepted that 'funding could never be a peripheral issue' (p142) because it could lead to 'their own sacking or the redundancy of staff' (p142). They adopted mainly authoritarian approaches to leadership, with some electing to be very directive at all times whilst others admitted to imposing their views after first 'selling the idea' (Lumby and Tomlinson, 2000 p145). However, this intensely masculinist style of leadership was later tempered by 'a second wave of light touch managerialism' (Lumby, 2002 p3). 'Principals do assert their right to take decisions with which others might not agree initially or ever, but they are not so foolhardy as to imagine that on the majority of occasions they do not need to listen, communicate and build support' (Lumby and Tomlinson, 2000 p146). None of these studies refer to any BME principals.

Senior leaders focused on strategic issues, delegating curriculum delivery to middle managers who thereby maintained some of their professional identities as educators, although principals intervened when they identified financial

savings (Lumby and Tomlinson, 2000). That said, managerialism does not ignore the needs of students any more than professionalism focuses solely on student needs (Lumby, 2001; Simkins and Lumby, 2002). Nevertheless, the business imperative dominated college leadership (Lifelong Learning UK, 2009a). In a study involving thirteen principals, including two women, Withers (2000) found that 'finance…and external control…was a major determinant of life' (p375). One woman principal explained the pressures:

> The biggest attitudinal change is the concept of working to contract compliance targets…We have the highest level of audit of any organisation I have ever come across (Withers, 2000 p376).

Principals recognised their responsibilities in 'providing a leadership in which the staff had confidence' (Withers, 2000 p379), but a study in one college found that 85% of respondents 'believed that the college management did not share the same educational values as staff' (Randle and Brady, 1997 p232). One female principal acknowledged that 'staff do not want the job at any price…They see the hours and the demands and they know the buck stops with you' (Withers, 2000 p380). Despite initial tensions, new opportunities opened up within leadership teams pursuant to their new functions (Withers, 2000) which enabled some women to progress.

2.1.8 Women's representation in college leadership
2.1.8.1 Introduction

It is important to highlight the under-representation of women generally (Wild, 1994; Cole, 2000; Women's Leadership Network, 2010, 2012) and the absence within this new leadership cohort of BME women, whose representation within college leadership still remains low (Lifelong Learning UK, 2011a, b).

2.1.8.2 Under-representation of women in senior leadership

2.1.8.2.1 Women principals

There were 13 (3.3%) women principals compared with 394 men in 1990, increasing to 81 women (17%) by 1997 (Cole, 2000), with little further change in the proportion of women leaders between 1997 and 2006 (Frearson, 2003; Lifelong Learning UK, 2006). BME women were significantly under-represented (Commission for Black Staff in Further Education, 2002). The cohort of principals included two BME women in 2005 (Times Educational Supplement, 2005) rising to five in 2009 (Times Educational Supplement, 2009) and nine in 2011 (Network for Black Professionals, 2011). Surveys also found that the proportion of women recruited as principals dropped during the economic recession (Women's Leadership Network, 2010, 2012).

2.1.8.2.2 Women senior leaders other than principals

'Senior management remained more men's work than women's' (Deem et al, 2000 p231). Data analysing women's representation within senior leadership, which equates to membership of senior management teams, start from 2007-08. These data show increases in the proportion of women managers but do not differentiate between white and BME women (Lifelong Learning UK, 2008b). However, only 3.5% of senior managers in 2008-09 were identified as BME people (Lifelong Learning UK, 2009b).

2.1.8.3 Representation of women in middle management

One of the notable changes was an increase in women middle managers, defined as posts above lecturing or equivalent administrative grade (Lifelong Learning UK, 2009b), in areas such as human resources, finance and data management (Cole, 2000; Shain, 2000). Some women took positions which required them 'to bulldoze the terrible changes because they're desperate to get on' (Deem et al, 2000 p239). Yet despite the fact that women outnumbered men in the FE workforce, only 5.3% of women progressed to management roles compared to 7% of men (Lifelong Learning UK, 2009b). Nevertheless, the pool of women who might progress to senior leadership increased. The data were analysed separately by gender and race/ethnicity, so the proportion of BME women managers is unknown. This is a consistent gap in FE workforce data.

2.1.8.4 Under-representation of BME women

BME staff were under-represented in the FE workforce generally and in leadership and management in particular (Frearson, 2003). The Commission for Black Staff in Further Education (2002) reported that there were no BME women principals until 2001. However my research revealed that Dr Ethlyn Prince, a BME woman who came to the UK from Guyana, was the principal of Haringey College during the 1980s (College of North East London, 2009). She remained in post until 1990 and may well have been the first BME woman principal in the English FE sector. Dr Prince is a barrister and a former vice principal of the University of Guyana (Association of Business Executives, 2010). She contributed to publications issued by the FE Staff College (Coombe Lodge Report, 1987) but despite this, her contribution to FE

leadership appears to have been invisible to the Commission for Black Staff in Further Education (2002).

The Commission found that in 2001 only four out of 412 mainstream colleges in England had BME principals, and the 'circumvention of established recruitment and selection procedures…and racially biased recruitment and selection practices' (Commission for Black Staff in Further Education, 2002 p51) contributed to the under-representation of BME people. The Commission encountered difficulties in collecting data about BME staff generally and BME senior staff in particular and was unable to report on the gender of BME leaders (Commission for Black Staff in Further Education, 2002). This demonstrated the low priority afforded to mapping leadership diversity by the FEFC, which established staff individualised records (SIR) without including data fields to collect this information. The LSC, which took over from the FEFC in 2001, continued to collect SIR data in the same way. Said (1993) describes failure to include the BME experience as 'the epistemology of imperialism' (p308). A survey by the Network for Black Managers (2005a) revealed that over 70% of FE and Sixth Form colleges had no BME staff in senior management positions (Table 1). These data do not separate FE colleges from Sixth Form colleges.

Table 1: FE and Sixth Form Colleges with no BME senior managers
(Source: Network for Black Managers, 2005a)

Region	Total number of FE and Sixth Form colleges	Colleges with no BME senior managers
Eastern	34	29 (85%)
East Midlands	26	12 (48%)
Greater London	53	22 (41.5%)
Northern	23	19 (83%)
North West	63	52 (78%)

South East	67	58 (87.8%)
South West	29	25 (76%)
West Midlands	49	31 (63%)
Yorkshire and Humberside	42	26 (71.4%)

Across the FE and Sixth Form colleges, 58 (19%) of the 313 BME managers

were in senior management positions (Network for Black Managers, 2005a).

Of the 313, 174 (55%) were women, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2**:** BME women managers in FE and Sixth Form colleges
(Source: Network for Black Managers, 2005a)

Region	Number of BME women senior and middle managers in FE and Sixth Form colleges
Eastern	3
East Midlands	16
Greater London	95
Northern	1
North West	12
South East	10
South West	11
West Midlands	18
Yorkshire and Humberside	8

Many BME middle managers worked in finance or human resources which

impacts negatively on opportunities to progress to principalship because

governors have traditionally appointed curriculum specialists (Network for

Black Managers, 2005a). The survey also found that there were no BME

senior managers in 12 key sector organisations, including the LSC, DfES,

Ofsted, the Adult Learning Inspectorate, CEL, the Association of Colleges, the

Learning and Skills Development Agency and the main recognised trades

union (Network for Black Managers, 2005a). The absence of BME voices at

executive level within these agencies might help to explain the absence of

discourses which could contribute to better understandings around race equality issues within FE in much mainstream policy and research.

The section next explores the impact of masculinist culture and discourse on those women who progressed to leadership positions in FE. Research has tended to be based on the structural positions of managers within college hierarchies such as principal, senior manager or middle manager. Accordingly the next sections outline research findings within this structural framework.

2.1.9 Women leaders' responses to managerialism

2.1.9.1 Introduction

Studies confirmed the masculinist culture and discourse within FE and demonstrated its negative impact on women who held or aspired to leadership positions (Kerfoot and Whitehead, 1998; Cole, 2000; Ball, 2008). Research found that 'the association of certain management tasks and styles with embedded and very traditional understandings of masculinity and femininity means that gender has inevitably been bound up with organisational change' (Leonard, 1998 p74). 'Management itself has long been perceived as synonymous with masculinity' (Leonard, 1998 p75) and 'women who do "make it" may feel a strong pressure to…perform their posts like men' (p75). Indeed, unless women incline towards men's way of working, they tend to be overlooked (Ozga, 1993). Ozga's (1993) findings were confirmed by later research (Heineck, 2009) which revealed that, following a study of over 5000 people in a wide range of workplaces, women were more likely to be promoted if they adopted masculinist approaches, displaying aggression, single-

mindedness and not being too agreeable. Further, women have to outperform

men in order to be considered equally competent (Carli, 1999). However,

these studies do not offer insights into any differences there may be between

the experiences of white and BME women, although it seems unlikely that

there were many BME women senior managers in FE at that time. This is a

gap to which this study can contribute.

2.1.9.2 Women principals' and senior leaders' responses to managerialism

White women who joined the cohort of principals experienced a hostile

environment within which white masculinist managerialist culture prevailed

(Leonard, 1998; Cole, 2000). In the schools sector, BME women reported

'stereotypical assumptions that men make better leaders' (Bush et al, 2005

p57). Male hostility has been linked to action aimed at transforming social

relations which is 'rigged in favour of the maintenance of the very processes

the action wishes to disrupt' (Lumby, 2009 p353). Thus assertions of the need

for change, together with any necessary policy adaptations, 'will be pursued

within systems which preclude success, … so the net result is likely to be little

change in the experience of those individuals and groups who are minority,

and subject to attitudes and actions which oppress' (Lumby, 2009 p354). The

pioneering white women principals acknowledged their need for support and

networks to combat isolation (Cole, 2000). This isolation deterred other

women from aspiring to leadership (Deem et al, 2000; Cole, 2000; Shain,

2000).

2.1.9.3 Middle manager's responses to marketisation

Whilst senior leaders 'create the vision' (Briggs, 2002 p65) middle managers 'articulate it in practical terms' (p65). This assumes that middle managers accept the vision and are willing to implement it. However, a key challenge for middle managers after incorporation was the self-management of a 'double identity' (Gleeson and Shain, 1999 p470), namely the binary between professional identity within subject area and the new accountability to senior leaders for the delivery of targets (Briggs, 2002).

Research amongst middle managers across five colleges (Gleeson and Shain, 1999) revealed a threefold typology of responses to this conflict between managerialism and teacher professionalism. Some middle managers became 'willing compliers' (Gleeson and Shain, 1999 p474) wholeheartedly embracing the business culture and transforming their professional identities, reporting their willingness to work long hours and welcoming change because of greater opportunities for 'possible recognition and promotion' (p475). Importantly, women formed the majority in this group.

The majority of middle managers became 'strategic compliers' (Gleeson and Shain, 1999 p482), co-operating in a minimalist way whilst maintaining ideological hostility to managerialism and rejecting notions of career progression. Others wholly rejected marketisation and were 'unwilling compliers' (Gleeson and Shain, 1999 p479), looking to leave as soon as they

could (Gleeson and Knights, 2008). There is no indication of the gender or racial/ethnic composition of either of these two groups.

Research which I undertook a decade after incorporation with a mixed gender group of white middle managers in one college, which was published in Gunter et al (2003), revealed a fourth typology of responses amongst some newly appointed middle managers, namely 'pragmatic compliance' (p16). This manifested itself in the acceptance of managerialism as the prevailing context, a willingness to work both with senior managers and with lecturers, and the construction of a dual professional identity as both educator and manager.

This research into responses of middle managers to marketisation gives some insights into gender but no insights into race/ethnicity. The next section presents research which foregrounds race/ethnicity.

2.1.9.4 Responses of BME managers to managerialism

A group which included five female BME middle managers in FE undertook a management development programme supported by the Network for Black Managers and the national funding bodies (Mackay and Etienne, 2006). At the start of this programme they aspired to progress to senior leadership and described themselves as 'highly motivated' (Mackay and Etienne, 2006 p17). Their characteristics would place them into Gleeson and Shain's (1999) category of 'willing compliers' (p474), working positively with senior leaders, undertaking management qualifications and embracing opportunities for

progression. However, these BME managers did not receive the expected

support from their white line managers or other college leaders:

> There's no-one to say how's your course work going? What have
> you started? What areas are you looking at? Could we help in these
> areas? And so you are just left to get on with it (Mackay and Etienne,
> 2006 p17).

As a result of their isolation and marginalisation, the five BME women middle

managers significantly revised their ambitions. Three left the FE sector for

alternative careers, a fourth was seeking work outside her college and the fifth

abandoned her previous ambition to progress to senior leadership (Mackay

and Etienne, 2006).   A mixed gender study into the impact of marketisation on

the careers of BME staff in a range of positions in FE revealed similar

disillusionment amongst some BME women managers who attributed their

marginalisation to managerialism, racism and the abandonment of any focus

on diversity (Sargeant, 2007). This literature suggests that the pool of BME

women who might progress to senior leadership reduced because of negative

experiences as middle managers. Mackay and Etienne (2006) highlight 'the

lack of UK-based published narrative on the experiences of black managers in

education' (p24) and call for 'greater research attention' (p24) to this important

area. This study adds to what is known by highlighting the experiences of

some BME women in senior leadership positions.

2.1.10 Summarising this first main section

This first main section of the literature review has mapped the changes

introduced by the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 whereby colleges

became independent incorporated institutions. It has revealed how governing

bodies' powers increased as they became responsible for overseeing colleges along business lines, and has exposed issues relating to the racial/ethnic and gender composition of these governing bodies.

The literature highlighted the new marketised environment within colleges, dominated by managerialist and masculinist discourses which isolated women. Research shows that some white women exercised their agency and progressed their careers in this new environment whilst others rejected managerialism and career progression (Gleeson and Shain, 1999; Gunter et al, 2003; Gleeson and Knights, 2008). However, studies revealed that BME women's agency was curtailed by additional structural barriers including racism compared to their white counterparts (Mackay and Etienne, 2006; Sargeant, 2007). Throughout this section, references have been made to gender and race/ethnicity. Theoretical concepts relating to gender and racial/ethnic identities are explored in the next section.

2.2 GENDER AND RACE/ETHNICITY AS IDENTITIES

2.2.1 Defining identities

Before embarking on a discussion of gender and racial/ethnic identities, it is useful to define the concept of identity, although 'identities – be they of occupational role or of social identity – no longer have the durability and clarity which they once enjoyed' (Hartley, 2009 p14).

> As a working definition we might understand identity to be the creation of a self concept, in part self and in part socially constructed, always in response to the limitations of what is acceptable…It is multiply layered; individual identity rather than a singular identity. It will be shaped by self and by exogenous

pressures as a system of negotiated fluid choices which are in part controlled by the individual and in part imposed (Lumby, 2009 p355).

This study acknowledges that each participant creates her own identity which is shaped by multiple subjectivities (Blackmore, 2010). Butler (2004) supported Foucault's (1984) view that subjectivity is the effect of one's belonging to a particular discourse. We are not born as subjects but have to become 'subjectivated', thus 'we gain our identity but only as a result of subjection' (Vlieghe, 2010 p162). Social relationships within the life world involve interactional relationships with other people (Schutz, 1970). That inter-subjectivity should be treated as a 'fundamental ontological category of human existence' (Schutz, 1970 p31) taking place within an interactive and communicative relationship. It follows that this relationship is elliptical and has two subjective foci, so that there may or may not be mutual understanding, depending on the quality of the communicative relationship between the parties and the extent of the 'reciprocity of motives and the reciprocity of perspectives' (Schutz, 1970 p33). In relation to creating meanings, Schutz (1970) speaks of the 'problems of relevance' (p21) used by individuals in interpreting and responding to issues and events, asserting that given its cultural values, each group establishes its own prevalent 'domains of relevance' (p24). This raises interesting issues about the relative power relationships which shape responses by and towards persons whose gender and/or racial/ethnic identities differ from those prevalent in the group, such as white and BME women leaders in FE.

2.2.2 Gender identity

'Gender identity is conceptualised now as individualised embodiments of social, cultural and historical constructions' (Arnot, 2009 p213). Gender identity relates to a person's self concept of being female or male, and a person's gender is performative, something that they do, and do recurrently in interacting with other people (West and Zimmerman, 1991; Lumby, 2009). 'If the identification of "gender" is not to be made via the body, it must be made via analysis of performed behaviour' (Francis, 2010 p478). Butler (1990) describes gender as 'constituting the identity it is purported to be, …performatively constructed by the very "expressions" which are said to be its results' (p25). Therefore 'one's sex is given but one's gender is a choice' (Gray, 1993 p113), although Bourdieu (2001) warns that 'the biological differences between the sexes…can appear as the natural justification of the socially constructed difference between the genders, and in particular, the social division of labour' (p11). Thus women experience disadvantage within male dominated cultures, because 'they are separated from men by a negative symbolic coefficient which, like skin colour for blacks, or any other sign of membership of a stigmatised group, negatively affects everything that they are and do, and which is the source of a systematic set of homologous differences' (Bourdieu, 2001 p93). This analysis places gender and race oppositionally, failing to acknowledge their intersectionality in the identities of BME women.

'The self is positioned in discourse and constructed in social interaction' (Francis, 1999 p391), and there is no subjectivity beyond social or cultural linguistic categories. Therefore who we are is constituted in the performance

of identities (Butler, 1990, 1993) although 'gender productions are complex, contradictory and fluctuating' (Francis, 2010 p485). Importantly, these should not be seen as pre-existing roles which are taken on by the subjects (Vlieghe, 2010). Rather, they become real and produce identities through speech and actions, that is, through the social categories which a person verifies in their daily performative life (Butler, 2004). This iteration is at the root of identity production which then offers an analysis for resistance leading to social change (Butler, 1990, 1993). Re-iteration, that is the decision to reshape and transform the identity bestowed socially or culturally by others, can produce transformation which can unsettle normative hierarchies, creating new subjectivities with emancipatory effects (Butler, 1990, 1993). An example of how this can occur would be if a man calls a woman a lesbian as an insult, the woman may respond by telling the man she is proud to be a lesbian, demonstrating emancipatory linguistic transformation (Butler, 1990). The same analysis could also be applied to racial/ethnic identities, where reiteration through emancipatory linguistic transformation could transform negative racial or ethnic slurs, creating new subjectivities which could further unsettle normative hierarchies with further emancipatory effects.

Poststructuralists reject 'essentialised notions of femininity in which homogenising conceptions of what it means to be female depict women as uniformly nurturant, affiliative and good at interpersonal relationships' (Reay and Ball, 2000 p145), positing that 'gendered identities are in context more fluid and shifting' (p145). In this context Collard (2001) 'challenges researchers and theorists to resist reductive explanations of leader beliefs and

behaviours' (p352) based on gender stereotypes, and by extension this could also apply to racial/ethnic stereotypes. Essentialist stereotypes may create subjectivities which oppress women through socially constructed differences which might further contribute to their exclusion or marginalisation. However, Francis (2010) defends the retention of sex difference as a point of analysis 'to facilitate identification of continuing discrimination and inequality according to sex' (p481) whilst acknowledging that a more accurate, albeit clumsy, discourse would refer to 'those discursively constructed as female' (p481). In this context Fuller (2010) explored the gendered leadership of a woman secondary school head teacher and found that she manifested traits which she and some colleagues, using their own subjective constructions of identities, identified as feminine and masculine, although other colleagues rejected this gendered basis of analysis.

The performative view of gender raises the problem of how binaries such as masculine or feminine might be delineated (Francis, 2010). If masculinity is understood through 'socially dominant…binary understandings of masculinity as rational, strong, active; and femininity as emotional, weak, passive' (Francis, 2010 p479) this risks locating women leaders within 'intrinsically negative frameworks' (Crenshaw, 1991 p1242). Even where management practices which favour trust and emotional intelligence have emerged, these are 'associated with white middle class femininity' (McTavish and Miller, 2009 p356) and therefore do not benefit all women. Yet despite widespread contesting of masculinist leadership orthodoxy (Al-Khalifa, 1989; Hall, 1996;

Reay and Ball, 2000; Mavin and Bryans, 2002; Coleman, 2002; Fitzgerald, 2003) it perpetuates in many leadership studies.

2.2.2.1 Gender identities and leadership

Researchers have suggested that women's early life experiences shape their future professional identities and leadership styles (White et al, 1992; Collins and Singh, 2006). Institutions such as the state, the workplace and schools are gendered locations where discourses of masculinity dominate (Ozga, 1993; Connell, 1995). Bourdieu (2001) asserts that 'the social order functions as an immense symbolic machine tending to ratify the masculine domination on which it is founded… It is the sexual division of labour' (p9). Bourdieu (2001) highlights the need for 'a radical transformation of the social conditions of production' (p42) because 'the best intentioned of men…perform discriminatory acts' (p59). The historical domination by male predecessors can be recognised as impacting on how modern women experience and interpret social interactions (Schutz, 1970). We cannot escape our relations with others and are vulnerable to the existing social order, even where this is not founded on rationalist or individualist morality (Butler, 2004). This analysis could also be extended to race/ethnicity because the social order in the UK functions to ratify whiteness (Troyna, 1998). Thus BME women face a social order within which they are doubly jeopardised.

The London Feminist Salon Collective (2004) asserts that feminist academic identity only makes sense if identity is also related to men, because a separate identity has to be relational to other. Coleman (1996) and Blackmore (1999)

have critiqued the tendency to create a binary between women's and men's leadership, although Leathwood (2005) warns that a stereotypically feminine approach could be met with derision in a managerialist culture. Indeed, 'successful women might espouse masculinist managerialism; that might be a crucial contributory factor leading to their success' (Fuller, 2010 p368). Francis (2010) identified difficulties in characterising behavioural characteristics as masculine or feminine, whilst Whitehead (1998) asserted that 'in every day parlance, masculinity is usually considered to be something that men have… It can be readily located in those gendered stereotypes which purport, as do all stereotypes, to anchor, pin down, and make sense of difference, complexity and change with the minimum of critical examination' (p203-4). In this regard Collard (2001) warns that 'essentialist stereotypes of male and female leaders need to be treated with great caution, because organisational cultures interact with gender identities to create complex tapestries which are not fully illuminated through a singular lens' (p346). The inclusion of context here highlights that women leaders' agency may be curtailed by the structures within which their leadership is enacted, therefore 'we are going to need something more than women in positions of power to change prevailing market orthodoxies' (Reay and Ball, 2000 p156).

'The gender equality duty requires all public sector organisations to eliminate sex discrimination and pay due regard to gender equality' (McTavish and Miller, 2009 p351). However, marketisation and managerialism have prioritised the masculine in terms of FE management and organisational cultures (Thomas and Davies, 2002), leading to significant under-

representation of women in FE leadership. Blackmore (1999) posits that leadership itself should be problematised as a key concept in educational discourses, proposing the interesting conundrum that 'perhaps the focus upon leadership is itself the biggest barrier to gender equality' (p222). All this raises important issues for the development of leaders who should 'become open to the value of an alternative point of view' (Vleighe, 2010 p166) and 'be willing to go through a process of radical dispossession' (p167). Much of the literature explores leadership through a lens based on social constructions of either gender or race/ethnicity, overlooking the fact that for BME women, that lens has a dual focus.

2.2.3 Racial/ethnic identities

2.2.3.1 Race and identities in white lives

Guneratnam (2003) advocates the need to 'probe and complicate understandings of dominant discourses' (p178) and it is acknowledged that the construction of racial identities in white lives is an often-neglected area (Byrne, 2006). Discourses around race/ethnicity frequently focus exclusively on minority groups within a society, and there is a tendency to overlook the fact that white identities reveal heterogeneity in similar ways to other identities (Troyna, 1998). In this study, the key research problem relates to women's under-representation within FE leadership, including the particular under-representation of BME women. Research revealed that FE leadership is overwhelmingly white and male, and whereas white women were marginalised or excluded because of their gender, BME women faced barriers based on both gender and race/ethnicity. Therefore the research raises issues of

gender in relation to all participants whereas issues of race/ethnicity are only

raised in relation to BME participants. That said, the aim was to create a

discourse which includes the voices of white and BME women leaders in FE,

creating ties across racial/ethnic boundaries whilst at the same time avoiding

any assumptions that participants' responses to their leadership experiences

were heterogeneous. Therefore the findings and analysis are presented so as

to show similarities and differences in participants' understandings and

interpretations both across and within differing racial/ethnic identities.

2.2.3.2 Terminology
**Before exploring racial/ethnic minority identities, it is necessary to
comment on the use of language in this context. Different individuals,
groups and organisations adopt a variety of terms when referring to
racial/ethnic identity.   I have engaged in lengthy debates with members
of black and minority ethnic communities about the comparative merits
in the use of the term black as opposed to BME, and I am conscious that
for some people this is a highly contested issue. I acknowledge that
black feminists prefer the term Black because they consider it brings
unity to discourses about race (Maylor, 2009; Mirza, 2009). However, I
adopted the term BME throughout this study, in line with a study of BME
school leaders for the National College of School Leadership by Bush et
al (2005) which was echoed by Ogunbawo (2012) in reviewing BME
leadership courses in the schools sector. On a more practical note, the
term BME is used within FE data collection and reporting systems, which
meant that when I sent a questionnaire to colleges using this language,
they were able to extract the requested data readily. It is worth noting
that the Network for Black Professionals, which makes claim to be the
champion for equality and diversity in the learning and skills sector,
uses the term 'black' in its organisation title but has traditionally adopted
the term BME in its publications. During the course of this research, the
Network introduced the term BAME (Black, Asian and minority ethnic) in
some publications (Network for Black Professionals, 2009), whilst
Campbell-Stephens (2009) proposes the term 'black and global majority'
(p321) in recognition of global populations. All this illustrates the
complex discourses surrounding racial/ethnic nomenclature.**

2.2.3.3 BME identities

**Warmington (2009) acknowledges the 'false dimension' (p281) of race
but asserts that 'society is sinewed by raced practices' (p287). Even
though 'race may lack scientific integrity it is a lived experience'**

(Warmington, 2009 p283), and so 'we live with race as if it has meaning and we live within a society in which those raced meanings have innumerable consequences' (p284). Importantly, there is a distinction between the right to be different and the right to be equal within a society (Malik, 1996), thus 'issues of identity and difference are relational' (Leibowitz et al, 2010 p89). Mac an Ghaill (1999) encourages exploration of 'the theoretical shift beyond the black-white model of racism – the colour paradigm – towards one in which cultural and religious identities are foregrounded' (p61). People's worlds are complemented by 'the world of predecessors' (Schutz, 1970 p37), that is, their indirect relationship with others through access to history, literature and objects from the past which also contribute to their social understandings. Indeed, it can be argued that the particular history of oppression which many BME people have suffered has impacted on their modern social interactions and social understandings in the UK, and also on those of their white contemporaries whose predecessors were responsible for historical events such as slavery and colonisation.

Racial/ethnic identity 'has two aspects, the historical in terms of the "roots" of the individual, and the geographical, in terms of the concentration of people of similar BME groups within an area' (Bush et al, 2005 p6). In a society which normalises and privileges whiteness, the impact of BME status can be such that people are 'forced to exist in a marginal and dependent place, totally outside the circuits…of power' (Said, 1993 p310). In this regard Troyna (1998) recognised that there is 'a politics of identity' (p95), the essence of which is to embrace an anti-racist perspective 'by challenging the use of whiteness as the normative reference or standard' (p95). It is also important to highlight the complexities involved in the development of personal identities in the context of corporate cultures pervaded by racism (Bell, 2003), and presumably also by sexism. This adds context to the cultural aspects identified by Bush et al (2005) and the linguistic aspects identified by Butler (1990). Crenshaw (1991) denounces the 'intrinsically negative frameworks in which social power works to exclude or marginalise those who are different' (p1242), and calls for liberatory discourses which would 'empty such categories of any social

significance' (p1242), thereby creating spaces which empower rather than marginalise or exclude. However, 'whilst official policy terms such as BME women denotes the social construction of difference through visible racial (black) and cultural (ethnic) markers, it does not emphasise the *process* of racial objectification' (Mirza, 2009 p9).

Warmington (2009) acknowledges that 'we live with race as a social fact' (p284) and although race is an 'unreal concept' (p287), it is manifested in 'the raced and sometimes racist practices of schools, colleges…and the labour market' (p287). Further, Warmington (2009) posits that there are 'raced boundaries, which are stronger in some areas than in others' (p290). Applying this within FE, it may be possible for a BME person to obtain employment in some capacity, but it may be a lot less possible for a BME person to progress to leadership, because 'the raced boundaries thicken in the promotion stakes' (Warmington, 2009 p290). It may be even harder for BME women who face barriers based on both gender and racial/ethnic boundaries.

2.2.4 Intersectionality of gender and racial/ethnic identities

In terms of gender identity, Butler (1990) argues that assuming the primacy of sexual difference marks psychoanalytic feminism as white, 'for the assumption here is not only that sexual difference is more fundamental, but that there is a relationship called "sexual difference" that is itself unremarked by race' (p181). Bourdieu (2001) considers gender and race/ethnicity oppositionally, overlooking the intersectional identities of BME women in terms of their gender and race/ethnicity. Crenshaw (1991) laments that 'contemporary feminist and antiracist discourses have failed to consider intersectional identities such as women of colour' (p1243) even though this intersectionality can 'shape the multiple dimensions of Black women's employment experiences' (p1244). 'The failure of feminism to interrogate race means that the resistance strategies of feminism will often replicate and reinforce the subordination of

people of colour, and the failure of antiracism to interrogate patriarchy means that antiracism will frequently reproduce the subordination of women' (Crenshaw, 1991 p1252). Thus 'women of colour can be erased by the strategic silences of antiracism and feminism' (Crenshaw, 1991 p1253) because 'the narratives of gender are based on the experiences of white women, and the narratives of race are based on the experiences of Black men' (p1298). More recently Basit (2012) acknowledges that gender identity 'entwines with other identities, notably ethnic considerations' (p407).

Whilst it is important to recognise that women and BME people do not form homogenous groups and that the experiences of BME women will not be homogenous either, BME women's voices can make powerful contributions to educational leadership debates. Mirza (2009) likens this to 'quilting, which is the art of stitching together pieces of cloth…and their hidden stories counter the silent consuming whiteness of normative legitimated knowledge and theory' (p2).

2.2.4.1 Race/ethnicity, gender and research in FE

There is a body of research which focuses on race/ethnicity in schools or higher education (Blair, 1998; Connolly, 1998; Gillborn , 1998; Anderson and Williams, 2003; Kohli, 2009; Leibowitz et al, 2010). The FE literature tends to focuses either on gender (Cole, 2000; Shain, 2000; Women's Leadership Network, 2009, 2010, 2012) or on race/ethnicity (Commission for Black Staff in

Further Education, 2002; Mackay and Etienne, 2006; Sargeant, 2007). Whilst Davidson (1997) explored the duality of racial/ethnic and gender identities on the careers of BME women managers in business, this intersectionality of race/ethnicity and gender on the experiences of BME women in FE appears to have been overlooked by many researchers. Illustratively, the data analysing membership of governing bodies and senior management teams do not reveal the representation of BME women in these cohorts (Lifelong Learning, 2008b, 2009b) and the findings of the Commission for Black Staff in Further Education (2002) also omitted these data.

2.2.4.2 Creating an inclusive discourse around gender and race/ethnicity

Although it may be difficult to maintain a common feminist position across differences, 'notions of agency offer hope and the possibility for engaging with and challenging structural, determined inequalities' (The London Feminist Salon Collective, 2004 p30) whereas 'retreat into epistemic communities' (p31) leads to dangerous fragmentation. Therefore a discourse which includes white and BME women has the potential to form a valuable collective (The London Feminist Salon Collective, 2004). 'We can sometimes choose to resist certain discourses and encourage others' (Francis, 1999 p391) because 'we can embrace solidarity as well as difference' (p391). Said (1993) further argues that, if we create an inclusive discourse, we then have to deconstruct the 'politics of identity' (p308) because 'it asserts a sort of separatism that wishes only to draw attention to itself' (p310). We therefore need to 're-imagine educational organisations' (Blackmore, 2010 p2) in order to diversify leadership. There is also a political dimension because ties can be created

with others who share political understandings, and these ties might be with people across gender and/or race/ethnic boundaries who share a vision of a new social order (Butler, 2004). Thus differences of gender and/or race/ethnicity which others might perceive to be important in the social construction of identity may become subsumed by common purpose, although that is not to deny the impact of these differences of identities on lived experiences. This study offers an opportunity to contribute to discourses which acknowledge both gender and racial/ethnic identities in the context of women's leadership in FE.

Having explored theoretical understandings of gender and race/ethnicity as identities, the next main section explores understandings of another key concept underpinning this study, that is, leadership.

2.3 LEADERSHIP

2.3.1 Introduction

The concept of leadership remains highly contested (Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Burns, 1978), whilst Ribbins (2006) asserts that leadership identity is a 'personally constructed political category' (p115). This section explores educational leadership theory, developing the argument that leadership is best understood as contextual and rejecting constraints imposed by any leadership orthodoxy, arguing for inclusive leadership discourses which offer spaces for the voices of both white and BME women.

2.3.2 Traits, styles and attributes

Structuralists such as Northouse (2001) and Fullan (2001) searched for critical leadership success factors based on trait, style and situation, producing graphs, charts, checklists, and lists of qualities for successful leadership. These were all based on the structuralist premise that there is an identifiable model for successful leadership which is capable of being universalised. This assumes a leadership orthodoxy which would deny space for the creation and enactment of leadership identity as it is individually defined and constructed. Whilst structuralist models have been recognised as contributing to greater understandings of the mechanics of leadership (Richmon and Allison, 2003), they failed to provide a panacea for those seeking to define normative characteristics of successful educational leaders. This approach was harshly critiqued as producing 'a conformist and relatively uniform leadership' (Gunter and Thomson, 2009 p479) which inhibits 'rigorous debates about…the reproduction of inequality' (p477). Further, Ogawa and Bossert (1995) present a technical-rational perspective, arguing that leadership is systemic because an organisation only exists in order to achieve its goals. This is an interesting perspective when applied to the FE sector, where leaders who fail to achieve targets set by the funding body can be removed and colleges can be compelled to merge with other colleges whose leaders are assessed as successful within these parameters (Sosik and Jung, 2010). As managerialism took hold in the educational sector, some researchers and practitioners valued structuralist approaches in understanding how organisations could succeed within the business model.

2.3.3 Leadership and managerialism

The quest to identify key transferable characteristics of successful leadership led researchers from Handy (1981) to Northouse (2001) to search for success indicators in private sector businesses. 'Leaders in business and in education face similar challenges – how to cultivate and sustain learning under conditions of complex, rapid change' (Fullan, 2001 pxi). This stance suggests a normative model of business leadership capable of analysis and transfer to educational settings. Another variation is the priority given to the meta task of orchestration (Wallace, 2003), a subtle form of transformational leadership based on functionalism whereby a leader steers change by pulling strings. This analysis is based on the view that educational managers are being increasingly positioned as agents for implementing government imperatives (Wallace, 2003). Wright (2001) goes further in asserting that there is no longer scope for any kind of leadership in the public education sector as government policy has imposed managerialism in its place. This leads logically to the abandonment of leadership as 'an unnecessary complication' (Nicholls, 2002 p15), to be replaced by analysing how a successful manager runs a successful organisation, a stance which Gunter (1997) has critiqued as 'jurassic' (p1).

A further perspective has added made by Leithwood and Jantzi (1999), who argue that the achievement of a vision for a school requires a leadership strategy together with management competence to realise it. The difference between leadership and management is said to be that 'leadership involves the definition and explication of values that underlie the direction in which the organisation will move' (Hallinger and Snidvongs, 2008 p26). The important

consequence of this is that 'leadership is viewed as an essential antidote to the unthinking acceptance of a direction derived from a set of policy directives' (Hallinger and Snidvongs, 2008 p26). This echoes Gunter's (1997) call for rejection of 'the management imperative' (p105) and aligns to Pring's (2009) plea for a reassessment of the moral aims and values of education to replace prevalent managerialist discourses. Ribbins (2006) supports Greenfield's (1993) complaint that 'too many leadership studies emphasise the characteristics of leaders, whereas what is important is their character' (p116).

2.3.3.1 Critiquing the business model

The analysis of educational leadership as akin to business management has been challenged. Gunter (1997) attacked 'the educational management product' (p4), comparing it adversely to the metaphor of 'a recipe in which the products are lists of ingredients plus a method which, if followed, will delight your staff and customers' (p5). Structuralist models have also been critiqued by Hallinger and Snidvongs (2008), who lament that 'leadership has been characterised as determining the "right things" on which the organisation will focus its financial and human resources, and motivating stakeholders to strive towards their accomplishment' (p26). Although Rayner (2009) acknowledges that 'leadership is understood to contribute to good management in a continuing process of learning' (p436), he also warns that 'purpose and function should not be lost in the day-to-day work of management' (p436). Indeed, Rayner (2009) is confident in rejecting structuralist approaches because 'there is no easy solution or template even if one is claimed, and then conveniently called best practice' (p438). Although business language has

been imported into educational settings through functionalist approaches (Sosik and Jung, 2010), the lack of clear evidence that the business model offers a panacea to leadership development within education has also been highlighted (Bush, 2009; Hartley, 2009). The next section offers a critique of normative approaches to leadership.

2.3.3.2 Critiquing normative models

This quest to identify a universally applicable leadership model is based on assumptions of a leadership orthodoxy which this study contests. Some bizarre consequences of a normative approach were demonstrated by Blount (2000) who charted the shift in United States (US) teacher orthodoxy from spinsters in the 19th century, then to married women, then to single men and finally to married men, revealing how changes in the biases of predominantly white male politicians reshaped teacher orthodoxy. Normative approaches tend to favour specific leadership identities and common values, and as a result they tend to exclude and marginalise those groups which do not overtly demonstrate such identities or values (Reay and Ball, 2000; Coleman, 2002; Campbell-Stephens, 2009).

Managerialism in education requires leaders to focus on the achievement of targets, therefore women and men leaders admit to the greater use of so-called male traits like authoritarianism (Reay and Ball, 2000; Wallace, 2003). Further, leadership is seen as akin to acting (Lumby and English, 2009), but 'whatever the ethnic background of the entrant, the role itself may be predicated on whiteness' (p104) because players must 'adopt the role

prescribed' (p105). The masculinity surrounding leadership may operate to the detriment of all women, whilst BME women may suffer additional detriment based on their race/ethnicity. Normative stances are also opposed by Mavin and Bryans (2002) who challenge existing boundaries which construct leaders as men, thus suggesting that women leaders are 'out of place' (p236), and by Campbell-Stephens (2009) who demands space for the voices of BME leaders to be 'heard and understood' (p321). Inherent in business models is the risk that the entrenched ideas and practices of the dominant group create a mono-cultural leadership orthodoxy in which 'white raced practices become normalised to the point that they become invisible, unmarked, and are not perceived as constituting a form of race' (Warmington, 2009 p291). Kohli (2009) makes explicit the need to include the black experience 'in the fight for educational justice, …ensuring understanding of the pain of racism in order not to perpetuate it' (p235). Further, Kohli (2009) asserts the value of 'a more inclusive dialogue' (p249) in creating 'pedagogic space for participants' (p249), whilst Mavin and Bryans (2002) highlight the need to redraw leadership boundaries 'as a challenge to the endemic racism and sexism on which leadership orthodoxy is traditionally defended' (p240). Thus rejection of normative approaches can create spaces for women leaders from all backgrounds to contribute to leadership discourses.

2.3.4 From structuralism to distribution
'Few leadership studies have generated the "scientific" instrumental knowledge which would place them in the paradigm of functionalism' (Hartley, 2010 p271), although Muijs et al (2006) suggest a link between the leadership style of a college principal, the college ethos, and improvements in teaching

and learning. Rather, the traits required of a leader depend on the context and

social networks within a particular organisation (Ogawa and Bossert, 1995).

This moves the analysis of leadership away from structuralism and towards

the interpretative paradigm. Gronn (2003) supports this analysis, rejecting

designer leadership 'as akin to cloning' (p21). Gronn (1996) saw influence

rather than traits or style as the key indicator of leadership and the duality of

agency and structure as paramount. A new leadership paradigm which

emphasised leadership outcomes or transformations and contrasted these

with leadership processes or transactions emerged, and the model of

distributed leadership developed (Gronn, 1996). This recognises the variety of

contexts in which leadership is enacted by individuals whose agency is

supported by the structures within which they operate. Hartley (2010) posits

that 'the functionalist and interpretative paradigms are in a number of ways

similar' (p274) when applied to distributed leadership, acknowledging that

functionalist research can help make an educational organisation more

effective and interpretative research can explore distributed leadership. This

point emphasises the lack of substance to the so-called paradigm wars and

links to Ribbins and Gunter's (2002) typology of knowledge domains which

prioritises the aims and intended audience of educational research rather than

its paradigmatic origins.

2.3.4.1 Distributed leadership

Distributed leadership denotes a model whereby leadership responsibilities

are spread across an organisation (Gronn, 2000). In educational settings,

there is rarely one leader and a group of followers because role creates

leadership notwithstanding hierarchy, based on division of labour (Fullan, 2001; Gronn, 2003). Within FE colleges, it is often a matter of pragmatism that leadership will be distributed because of the need for specialist skills and knowledge, as where departmental heads lead in developing and delivering the curriculum in their areas. However, in recent times the educational leadership imperative often derives from government or other officialdom, which potentially restricts the departmental head's scope to develop and deliver the curriculum because policy initiatives could deny the ability to distribute leadership in the traditional way (Gunter, 2003). In this connection Hartley (2009) notes that 'who distributes, to whom, what and why are inevitably political decisions' (p145).

Distributed leadership can be analysed within a framework of agency and structure in that the organisation enables various persons to enact leadership in specific contexts (Gronn, 1999b). Hartley (2009) cautions that although distributed leadership 'resonates with a democratic notion of distributing power… It has the endorsement of government who regard it as a pragmatic solution to easing the job overload of head teachers, or as a way of attracting teachers to management positions which are becoming increasingly shunned by them' (p148). Although some researchers (Archer, 1996; Sawyer, 2002) have conflated agency and structure ontologically, it is important to ascertain 'whether agency is enabled or constrained purely internally within the organisation' (Hartley, 2009 p145) because for Hartley (2010), distributed leadership 'is mainly about accomplishing the organisational goals…set by officialdom' (p281).

2.3.4.2 Critiquing distributed leadership

Distributed leadership is critiqued as 'decidedly weak in making explicit its theoretical basis' (Hartley, 2010 p278), and because 'there is a paucity of empirical quantitative research concerning its effect on organisational outcomes' (Hulpia et al, 2010 p46). Hartley (2009) challenges the belief that distributed leadership has 'a positive and measurable effect on pupil attainment' (p147), critiquing it as 'a means to an end whose purpose is organisational not personal development' (p281). Further, the distribution of supervisory aspects of leadership had a negative impact on teacher commitment to their schools, whereas their involvement in decision-making had a marked positive effect (Hulpia et al, 2010). Thus distributed leadership offers little scope for the development and implementation of personal leadership identities and values. These critiques within educational research communities led to the emergence of an inclusive leadership model which takes account of context.

2.3.5 Inclusive leadership

The case for inclusive leadership is made by Rayner (2009). This differs from distributed leadership because it is 'shaped by the agency of individuals' (Rayner, 2009 p441) and 'it may be formal, informal, recognised, rewarded or taken for granted' (p440). The 'goal for inclusive leadership is the management of a cultural integrity and a parity of esteem for members in the learning organisation/community' (Rayner, 2009 p441), and this 'involves asserting ethical virtues in concert if (educational leadership) is to attempt to

manage cultural integrity in the form of balance and integration' (p444). But 'leadership is more than just managing diversity' (Bruner, 2008 p484) because 'social justice symbolises the concept of fairness and advocates that no-one be discriminated against on the grounds of religion, belief, gender, colour, class, wealth or social status' (p483). Inclusive leadership rejects functionalist approaches because functionalism suggests that the vision and organisation culture are set by the leader, whereas the ethos of inclusive leadership embraces the voices of all members in shaping and influencing leadership within the institutional context. Although this model of inclusiveness was developed in the context of special educational needs, it could be applied more widely as it clearly affords opportunities for gender and race/ethnicity to be foregrounded within leadership discourses. This inclusive leadership model can be linked to Ribbins' (2006) critical and axiological knowledge province within the map of knowledge domains.

2.3.5.1 Leadership context

The importance of context is recognised by Kirkham (2003) who asserts that the characteristics and identity of the leader emerge from the need to deal with a plethora of issues and compares leadership to 'herding cats' (p24). An integrated typology of leadership based on understandings of the autonomy of the individual – trait, behaviour and style, the interactions of followers and the situational context is proposed by Richmon and Allison (2003). This model is grounded in a humanistic approach within the interpretative paradigm. However, whilst Richmon and Allison (2003) describe their typology as integrated, it is not inclusive because it does not take account of the impact of

either gender or race/ethnicity, which are important contextual influences on leadership identity. 'The colour-blind discourse on educational leadership' (Campbell-Stephens, 2009 p321) should be challenged.

A persuasive set of arguments is posited by those who argue that leadership is organisational and contextual and that leadership is dependent on people, places and tasks (Lakomski, 1999). Functional positivism cannot therefore provide for the variety of contexts in which leadership is enacted. Rather, leadership is constructed by the values and understandings of those who construct it, and it therefore follows that if leadership is adjudged to be successful, and even where there are similarities between organisations, this success cannot be predicted, because it can only be analysed ex post facto. Thus leadership cannot be universalised (Lakomski, 1999).

In developing a map of educational leadership, Gunter and Ribbins (2002) argue that leading and leadership can best be understood by collating professional experiences from within contextualised settings. Like Gronn (1996), Gunter and Ribbins (2002) assert the importance of agency and structure in charting the dimensions of leaders and stress the need for an 'inclusive orientation' (p410) towards knowledge production in this field. Lumby (2006) demands a reassessment of educational leadership theory, because it 'continues historic exclusion and discrimination amongst leaders' (p163) and delivers 'sustained, defended, entrenched homogeneity' (p163). Any such reassessment offers opportunities to create spaces for the voices of

women and BME people to be valued and included in leadership debates
(Hall, 1996; Davidson, 1997; Fitzgerald, 2003; Lumby, 2006; Lumby and
Coleman, 2007; Campbell-Stephens, 2009; Warmington, 2009).

2.3.6 Leadership development in the FE sector

2.3.6.1 Introduction

Frearson (2003) highlighted the need for the FE sector to develop its
leadership and succession strategy because college leaders were
predominantly white men and almost half of senior managers were due to
retire between 2007 and 2012. Further, there were difficulties in attracting
applicants for leadership positions (DfES and Centre for Excellence in
Leadership, 2003). By way of response, the DfES established the Centre for
Excellence in Leadership (CEL), a national leadership college to provide
training for college leaders. This development could be linked to talent
management in the schools sector, where there has been a similar shortage of
applicants for headships and where strategies have been introduced to nurture
'leadership talent' (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2012 p2). In relation to schools,
Rhodes and Brundrett (2012) argue for 'incumbent heads to adopt a more
proactive stance towards the identification, development, succession and
retention of leadership talent amongst existing staff' (p6). However, if applied
to FE where there is white masculine domination of leadership (Frearson,
2003; Women's Leadership Network, 2010), this model risks failure to identify
those others, including white and BME women, who legitimately aspire to
leadership in opposition to the dominant discourse (Ozga 1993).

Gronn (1996) cautions against any conclusions that leadership can be developed through skills based training programmes, rejecting leadership 'cloning' (Gronn, 2003 p21) and emphasising the importance of context. Gunter and Thomson (2009) mount a scathing attack on training in which 'leadership is seen as a form of mandatory skills and behaviour training' (p472). In such contexts 'there is no scope for race and gender deconstruction' (Gunter and Thomson, 2009 p473). Warmington (2009) warns that normative training programmes can embed racism because they are based on majority and generic understandings and are insensitive to organisational context and culture amongst leaders. Women undertaking leadership training based on male leadership orthodoxy find themselves 'positioned against the characteristics of the male norm' (Tanton, 1994 p9), which might imply deficiency and could undermine self-belief, although Young (2004) found that women leaders often identified with 'male-type leadership behaviours' (p95). Morrison (2006) laments that 'issues of diversity are largely side-streamed' (p171) and, importantly, 'diversity and leadership should not be seen as divisible but integral to the development and enactment of leadership' (Morrison et al, 2006 p278).

In terms of context, it is also essential 'to acknowledge the importance of historical factors and structural constraints' (Faraday and Plummer, 1979 p780) regarding leadership. Hall (1996) posits that biography is crucial to understanding women head teachers' leadership performances, which are rooted in childhood, educational and career experiences and which cannot be divorced from gender identities. It is possible to argue strongly here that race

and ethnicity are just as significant as gender in understanding the importance

of biography and context (Kohli, 2009; Phoenix, 2009; Warmington, 2009;

Hughes and Giles, 2010). Yet despite widespread belief that leadership

training ensures 'a measure of consistency… that all graduates have achieved

at least threshold competence' (Bush, 2009 p378), 'empirical support for such

assumptions is weak and usually indirect' (p378).

2.3.6.2 Critiquing FE leadership training

Early FE leadership training was based on structuralist assumptions of desired

leadership models to be learned and practised by college leaders (Hay McBer,

2001). Normative training serves to deny individuals the right to use their

personal knowledge, experience, understanding and values in developing

leadership identities, and counters the embedding of diversity into leadership

(Lumby and Coleman, 2007). 'Difficulties in creating a new self-identity

emerge from the differences between masculine and feminine styles of

leadership' (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003 p495) so that 'it is difficult for many

women to accept and follow' (p496) normative leadership models. Research

in colleges assessed by Ofsted as effective revealed that no single style of

leadership prevailed, thus challenging the 'often normative stances taken with

regard to leadership' (Muijs et al, 2006 p103).

There was controversy with regard to CEL's skills based training for intending

college principals because, whilst the modules embraced finance, staffing,

estates and management skills, there was no reference to equality and

diversity issues in the proposed training packages (DfES and Centre for

Excellence in Leadership, 2003). This led to the establishment of a separate project, the Black Leadership Initiative (BLI), which offered training, mentoring and support for aspiring BME leaders within FE (Kenny, 2004). These developments illustrate the difficulties encountered by BME staff in seeking to place issues of race equality centrally on the agenda of mainstream FE leadership development. Ogunbawo (2012) insists that the 'designers and providers of leadership programmes should spend quality time in the consideration of how the identified benefits and values of customised BME programmes could be made available within the generic and mainstream leadership development programmes' (p172). Whilst 'segregation camps' (Ogunbawo, 2012 p172) of customised BME leadership programmes must be avoided, training for BME leaders should not re-create them as 'clones of their white colleagues' (Lumby and Coleman, 2007 p63). Indeed, any such model 'ossifies and homogenises leadership' (Gunter and Thomson, 2009 p480) because it ensures that 'those who hold knowledge which is counter or additional to that which is advocated have little chance to use it' (p477).

In 2008, the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) became responsible for delivering FE national leadership training (Learning and Skills Improvement Service, 2010). The training was based on the perceived need to run colleges as businesses, embedding a one-size-fits-all skills based approach. Such approaches can operate to exclude the contribution of those whose biographies and experiences have produced different kinds of knowledge and new ways of knowing (Fitzgerald, 2003; Gunter and Thomson, 2009). Morrison et al (2006) warn that 'generic leadership "solutions" to

educational problems are especially appealing, regardless of whether such solutions are culturally apposite or appropriately contextualised' (p281).

2.3.7 Summarising this section

Kholi (2009) and Phoenix (2009) concur in asserting the importance of diversity within educational leadership discourses and the need for minority experiences to be understood by all leaders.   Therefore 'the theory and practice of diversity and diversity management now require reconsideration if leadership for social justice, in its widest sense, is to be restored' (Morrison et al, 2006 p293). These researchers call for 'the Learning and Skills Sector to incorporate an integrated rationale to support a case for improved leadership for diversity' (Morrison et al, 2006 p291) based on a 'capabilities approach… which embeds both the business case, the education argument and ethical considerations' (p291). LSIS further announced its intention 'to establish, lead and develop…a new Leadership College for the sector… to lead, monitor and assess excellence in leadership… and drive increased supply and identification of talent among current and future leaders' (The Sunday Times, 2012). It remains to be seen whether this initiative will develop a more contextual approach underpinned by principles of inclusion which embed diversity into leading and leadership in FE.

Progression to leadership links to the concept of career, which the next section explores.

2.4 WOMEN'S CAREER DEVELOPMENT

2.4.1 Career aspirations

Gronn and Ribbins (1996) propose an analysis of leadership careers into four phases, namely the formation or initial career phase, the accession phase on taking up a leadership role, the incumbency phase when enacting leadership and the divestiture phase of relinquishing leadership. This established heuristic framework, which is more fully discussed in Chapter Three, was adopted in Hall's (1996) study of the careers of women head teachers and will be referred to throughout this section.

Research suggests that women's career aspirations in the formation phase are shaped by influences in the family and at school (White et al, 1992) and by ethnicity (Reay and Ball, 2000). Some research suggests that women who were the first born in the family are more likely to be high achievers (White et al, 1992). Aveling (2002) tracked the lives of 63 'academic achieving' (p266) young Australian women as they left school, developed careers, married and had children:

> When they chose their careers this was not simply a matter of options and choices; childhood experiences and parental expectations, family relationships, peers, schools, religion, social class, ethnicity and even chance events all combined to produce discursive fields within which they continually constructed and reconstructed their subjectivities (Aveling, 2002 p277).

The accounts provided by white women head teachers of their career development 'show that, far from being the victims of stereotypes encountering obstacles based on gender, they made choices at each stage

about what they wanted for themselves and their chosen profession' (Hall, 1996 p38).

2.4.1.1 Family background

There were no discernible patterns in the white women head teachers' accounts of family attitudes towards education and career aspirations (Hall, 1996). Some recalled family expectations of career success, but conversely where family values had not foregrounded such expectations, one woman 'decided to be different and get an education' (Hall, 1996 p39). Another woman reported conflicting parental views, with her father encouraging her towards a career whilst her mother wanted her to stay at home with her family (Hall, 1996). Hall (1996) found that all the white women head teachers reported greater affinity with their fathers than with their mothers, which suggests that 'the masculine traits associated with leadership could be more acceptable for them' (Reay and Ball, 2000 p147). However, other literature (White et al, 1992) posits that women take both their mothers and their fathers as role models. All the women head teachers stayed at school until the age of 18 and recalled their teachers' strong support and high expectations for their achievements (Hall, 1996).

Whilst Hall (1996) focused on white women, Davidson (1997) foregrounded the experiences of BME women who held management posts in business. They typically recalled one or both parents 'instilling in them high achievement needs' (Davidson, 1997 p21). Over half of their mothers held professional jobs (Davidson, 1997). In African Caribbean families, women tend to play a dominant role in the culture and hence mothers tend to be stronger role

models than fathers (Mirza, 1992). Within many BME families, educational achievement is prioritised as a means of social mobility (Mirza, 1992) although some BME cultures place less emphasis on educating daughters, prioritising sons because of expectations that sons will provide for their families (Drew and Demack, 1998).

2.4.1.2 Influence of school

Research suggests that white women head teachers developed personal career ambitions based on the values manifested in the schools they attended, which later shaped their visions in their own schools (Hall, 1996). Further, where they had been influenced by female role models they were much less likely to feel the need to 'imitate men's behaviour in order to progress' (Hall, 1996 p55). The literature reveals differences regarding the influence of UK schooling on white and BME girls, with white girls receiving more support and encouragement at school than their BME counterparts (Phoenix, 2009; Leibowitz et al, 2010).

2.4.1.3 Initial career choice

The literature maps factors which influenced women's career choices to become school teachers but not in relation to careers in FE. In choosing a career in schools, Hall (1996) found that 'the primary motivating factor…was commitment to teaching their subject' (p45). Some of these white women teachers initially tried out alternative careers, but 'once on the teaching track, their commitment never wavered' (Hall, 1996 p46). For these women, 'decisions about higher education were closely linked to decisions about

whether they intended having a career or not…and teaching offered the possibility of combining work and having children' (Hall, 1996 p46).

Evetts (1990) proposed a typology of women primary school teachers' responses to career which included firstly, an accommodated career whereby promotion is not sought or accepted, and its opposite, an antecedent career where career is given the highest priority. The third typology is the two-stage career, where career may be delayed for family reasons (Evetts, 1990). The fourth typology is the subsequent career, where the woman has no early career ambitions but these emerge later in her professional life, and the final typology is the compensatory career, where the woman seeks career advancement to compensate for personal or family unhappiness (Evetts, 1990). Hall (1996) noted that many women move across this typology during working life. Evetts's (1990) typology does not take account of the intersectionality of gender and race/ethnicity on career.

Evetts (1990) and Hall (1996) focused on the careers of white women school teachers, Osler (1997) and Bariso (2001) focused on BME women in schools, Anderson and Williams (2003) on race and gender in higher education, and Davidson (1997) on BME women in business. There appears to be no equivalent literature mapping factors influencing white or BME women's choice of careers in FE. This study can contribute towards filling this gap. Research suggests that women benefit from many factors in progressing their careers and also face a range of barriers, and these are explored in the following sections.

2.4.2 Factors which promote women's career progression

The literature identifies various factors which support women's career development.

2.4.2.1 Role models and mentoring

The under-representation of women in educational leadership is sometimes attributed to the absence of role models, but white women head teachers who attended girls' schools acknowledged positive role models from their schooldays (Hall, 1996). Some also acknowledged white male head teachers as role models, adopting visions, styles and values from these men when they themselves became heads (Hall, 1996). Within the workplace, particularly where there were no female role models, white women head teachers benefited from the support of informal male mentors who offered career guidance and showed confidence in their protégées' abilities by nurturing self-belief and encouraging them to aspire to leadership (Hall, 1996). These male mentors assisted the women to develop understandings of the prevalent masculinist organisational culture (Hall, 1996). In a study of school head teachers, over half of the women identified colleagues as the biggest influence on career paths (Fuller, 2008), whilst encouragement from extant leaders was reported as a key influence in supporting progression to headship amongst a group of US teachers (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003).

A study of BME school head teachers found that, in the absence of role models and support within schools, mentoring from within BME communities provided strong motivation (McKenley and Gordon, 2002). Participants on a

leadership development programme for BME school teachers highlighted the unique benefit of working with BME head teachers and course facilitators who acted as role models (Ogunbawo, 2012). BME staff in FE reported the scarcity of workplace role models and difficulties in gaining workplace mentors (Commission for Black Staff in Further Education, 2002), but where mentoring does take place, it is much valued (Johnson-Bailey, 2004). Although research demonstrates that same-race mentoring provides a substantially greater source of support and encouragement (Davidson, 1997; Johnson-Bailey and Cervero, 2004), witness statements to the Commission for Black Staff in Further Education (2002) demonstrated how empowering the support of white senior managers could be when based on trust and responsibility.

2.4.2.2 Support from family and friends

Equally important to the cohort of white women school head teachers in the incumbency phase of headship was the support of family and friends (Hall, 1996). Married women depended on husbands and family support in advancing to leadership, whilst single women relied on supportive family and friendship networks (Hall, 1996; Fuller, 2008). With this support, the white women's self-belief flourished and they 'learned to be assertive and to draw attention to their achievements and potential' (Hall, 1996 p61). Women managers in FE also depended on 'very supportive partners and reliable childcare' (Wild, 1994 p92). Davidson (1997) identified the similar importance of supportive family and friendship networks both in shaping BME women's initial career ambitions and in supporting career progression. One BME woman school head attributed her success partly to the fact that 'as a young

girl of 14, I was "adopted" and mentored by key people in the North London black community… to give me that incentive to go on' (McKenley and Gordon, 2002 p9).

2.4.2.3 Networks

Recent years have seen the proliferation of women's professional networks. These include the Women's Leadership Network, set up initially for FE women principals but later extending its membership to college women leaders more widely (Women's Leadership Network, 2007, 2011). However, white women head teachers assessed women's professional networks as much less important than family and friendship networks in developing confidence to seek career advancement (Hall, 1996).

Aspiring BME women leaders ascribe greater importance to supportive professional networks, valuing these as an antidote to 'the old boy's network' (Davidson, 1997 p89). Research in the US found that BME women leaders were less likely to access networks which include predominantly white women and more likely to be part of BME only networks (Becker, cited in Davidson, 1997). The Network for Black Managers, later renamed the Network for Black Professionals, was established in 1999 to provide a networking forum for BME staff in FE, and BME leadership development programmes also provide valued networking opportunities (Ogunbawo, 2012).

2.4.2.4 Self-belief

Gronn (1999b) posits that self-belief, derived both from confidence in one's competence and capacity and also from high self-valuing of one's worth, is an important element underpinning career success. Mixed gender research conducted amongst aspiring US school heads highlights the importance of self-belief for successful role transformation to leadership (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). Similarly, white and BME women teachers and managers in business reported that their self-belief was a key driver (Davidson, 1997; Hall, 1997; Coleman and Campbell-Stephens, 2010). The most successful BME women were those who had high self-belief and 'refused to blend in and become invisible, rather they were likely to acquire leadership skills which made them stand out from other colleagues' (Davidson, 1997 p87). One BME woman head teacher articulated her strong self-belief:

> I dress the dress and walk the walk. I am a bolshie black woman. I know how to use my power (McKenley and Gordon, 2002 p12).

Recent studies (Rhodes, 2012; Rhodes and Brundrett, 2012) highlight the key role of 'self-belief as a factor in the management of talent and the journey to leadership' (Rhodes, 2012 p2).

2.4.2.5 Career planning

US teachers undertaking a leadership development programme who developed a detailed 'leadership growth plan' (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003 p486) and who were 'working towards a specific career goal' (p491) were most likely to retain ambition and progress to leadership. Although there is some evidence that BME school teachers tend not to plan their careers (Coleman and Campbell-Stephens, 2010), there does not appear to be any literature relating to white or BME women's approach to career planning in the FE

sector and this is a gap to which this study can contribute. However, recent research relating to talent management in schools suggests that career development strategies such as career clinics, fast tracking, access to training and responsibility allowances can act as milestones towards leadership within career plans and could also bolster self-belief (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2012).

2.4.2.6 Summing up factors supporting career development

Role models and mentors, family and friends and professional networks all offer sources of support and encouragement for both white and BME women in progressing their careers and seeking to advance to leadership positions. These external sources are underpinned by the important factor of self-belief which can drive career planning and ambition. Set against these positive influences, barriers which inhibit or challenge women's career progression are next explored.

2.4.3 Barriers to women's career progression

Hall (1996) describes a 'glass ceiling' (p1) which limits white women's opportunities whilst Davidson (1997) posits that 'the glass ceiling for black professionals is set lower than the level experienced by white women managers and is more akin to a cement roof' (p15). A study in FE revealed that, whilst 89% of incumbent women leaders thought there were some or many barriers to career progression, twice as many BME respondents reported having encountered serious difficulties in their career paths compared with their white counterparts (Women's Leadership Network, 2010).) The barriers include:

> Behavioural models…which assign differential institutionalised roles to men and women as a result of traditional childcare arrangements:

deficiency models which presuppose a package of leadership skills which can be learnt, implying a deficiency in women which can be remedied by training: organisational constraint models which indicate covert and overt discrimination operating within promotion procedures (Wild, 1994 p88).

The various barriers are next depicted, beginning with structural barriers.

2.4.3.1 Marketisation and managerialism

The FE reforms served to 'perpetuate a culture of masculinity' (McTavish and Miller, 2009 p351) and to act as a barrier to women's career progression. Managerialism 'creates a competitive and individualist environment that excludes and marginalises femininity' (Thomas and Davies, 2002 p355). 'The little group at the top' (Leonard, 1998 p77) in many colleges was exclusively male, and 'access to this group was seen by some women to be remarkably closed' (p77) because 'it was made up of people with the same sort of background, the same sort of credentials… It's a bit like a gentleman's club!' (p78). Management practices in FE began to value emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills, often associated with white middle class femininity (Swan, 2006) which might lead to an expectation that white women managers would be welcomed. Paradoxically, these qualities were more highly valued when displayed by men because men were assessed as having gained 'new workplace capital' (Swan, 2006 p66) whereas women were seen as having these skills naturally.

Research in FE evidences that whilst some women found managerialism a barrier to career progression, the reasons differed between white and BME

women. Some white women middle managers exercised their agency in rejecting managerialism as too high a price to pay for progression to senior leadership (Kerfoot and Whitehead, 1998; Gleeson and Shain, 1999; Cole, 2000; Shain, 2000). One woman explained: 'I would be removed from the person that I originally was' (Shain, 2000 p227). Contrastingly, some BME women found themselves excluded from progression opportunities through structuralist masculinist and racist discourses (Mackay and Etienne, 2006; Sargeant, 2007). When one BME woman complained about the use of informal recruitment practices to promote white managers, she was rebuffed and informed that 'the Chief Executive has the power to appoint staff by a variety of means' (Mackay and Etienne, 2006, p20).

2.4.3.2 Sexism

'When women enter male-dominated leadership roles, they face expectations that have been shaped by these prior male occupants of the roles' (Eagly, 2007 pxix). All the white women head teachers experienced 'gender inequalities that contributed to differential access to opportunities for career development and promotion' (Hall, 1996 p47). Research has highlighted 'overt discrimination, direct discrimination, sexual harassment, indirect discrimination and prevailing social values' (Fuller, 2009 p27).

Almost two thirds of women head teachers reported 'sexist attitudes' (Fuller, 2009 p27) in relation to applications for jobs or promotion, and importantly, amongst younger women this proportion rose to over three-quarters. Candidates faced overt sexism in interviews, with one woman being told that

she was 'too attractive for the job' (Hall, 1996 p59). Another reported how she adapted her dress and manner so as to put the interview panel at ease, taking responsibility for managing the expected sexism (Hall, 1996). Women head teachers reported 'direct discrimination, for example, questions at interview stage with regard to having a family and managing childcare' (Fuller 2009 p27). Women leaders in FE described similar experiences of sexual stereotyping:

> Unless I wear a suit people always think I am a secretary… I find it bizarre that you have to wear a suit to be taken seriously, but you do' (Deem et al, 2000 p243).

Another described difficulties in working with her male counterpart:

> I had to establish that I wasn't his secretary. I had to establish that I was his equal (Deem et al, 2000 p224).

Both white and BME women managers in FE reported less favourable treatment than their male counterparts, including being paid less, being marginalised and having their contributions overlooked (Shain, 2000; Mackay and Etienne, 2006).

2.4.3.3 Isolation

Women leaders are often isolated on accession (Sachs and Blackmore, 1998), treated as 'outsiders within' (Anderson and Williams, 2003 p215), tending 'to have poor access to the powerful male dominated networks …and to be excluded from resources, information, the opportunity to establish allies and create mentoring relationships with males in senior positions' (Collins and Singh, 2006 p24). In the incumbency phase of college leadership, both white and BME women reported isolation (Cole, 2000; Shain, 2000; Mackay and Etienne 2006). One white woman, the only female principal in the county,

experienced her male counterparts as 'like a load of rutting stags' (Deem et al, 2000 p242). 'The long-established masculinist style' compounded isolation (Leonard, 1998 p74) so that 'women managers who do attempt to reshape the ways in which things are done may face hostility and isolation' (p75).

BME women managers work very hard and for long hours but experience isolation and difficulties in building relationships within the workplace (Bariso, 2001; Powney et al, 2003; Mackay and Etienne, 2006; Coleman and Campbell-Stephens, 2010). The tendency of white colleagues in FE to meet in public houses after work further isolated some BME women because the intersectionality of their gender and cultural or religious taboos made it difficult for them to socialise in this way (Mackay and Etienne, 2006). Some white staff in FE compounded this isolation by creating 'an "outgroup", particularly in relation to black and ethnic minority potential leaders' (Lumby, 2006 p151). One BME woman attributed her decision to leave FE to her 'bruising…and isolating' experience' (Mackay and Etienne, 2006 p23). The literature also reveals that BME women encounter the additional barrier of racism.

2.4.3.4 Racism

Whilst most barriers apply to both white and BME women leaders, BME women's intersectional identities mean that they 'face the double bind of racism and sexism' (Davidson, 1997 p78). The majority of a cohort of BME women on a course for aspiring BME school leaders identified the intersectionality of their race/ethnicity and gender as a barrier to career progression, although they found it difficult to differentiate between the two

(Coleman and Campbell-Stephens, 2010). At the accession stage of their careers in business, BME women described differential treatment where their race/ethnicity was a greater barrier than their gender, such as when a BME woman was asked at interview how she would deal with white middle class clients (Davidson, 1997). Common understandings were that 'black people have to be much better applicants in order to get the job in the first place' (Davidson, 1997 p84), and, in the FE sector, 'as black people we know that we are over qualified and work twice as hard as everyone else' (Mackay and Etienne, 2006 p19). Even when successful, BME women were likely to be 'ghettoised into black jobs…working mainly with black clients, …concentrated in unpopular specialities, …have inferior training opportunities, …and were much more likely to reach a career plateau than their white counterparts' (Davidson, 1997 p85). Widespread racism in the workplace meant that 'overall the BME women managers felt at a disadvantage compared to their white colleagues in terms of career prospects, recognition and feeling valued by their bosses' (Davidson, 1997 p86). In the schools sector, BME women head teachers accepted that racism was 'a fact of life' (Coleman and Campbell-Stephens, 2010 p43), highlighting that governors were often 'discriminatory as their attitudes could be conservative and unwilling to deviate from the "normal" patterns of appointment' (p44). This evidence suggests that race/ethnicity was a greater barrier than gender.

Similar perceptions of racist barriers echoed in the witness statements provided by BME staff to the Commission for Black Staff in Further Education (2002), although the Commission focused solely on race/ethnicity and did not

consider the intersectionality of race and gender on the experiences of BME women in FE. There were reports of racially biased recruitment practices, undervaluing relevant experience, tokenistic attitudes towards BME staff and ghettoisation of BME staff into non-mainstream areas, whilst BME staff were particularly and negatively affected by restructuring and redundancies (Commission for Black Staff in Further Education, 2002). There were reports of senior BME staff being downgraded, and perceptions that BME staff 'had to do more than their white counterparts in return for lower status and pay' (Commission for Black Staff in Further Education, 2002 p51). However, when BME staff challenged racist practices they suffered even greater detriment (Sargeant, 2007). Access to part time work, a traditional route for entry to FE (Ainley and Bailey, 1997), formed a particular barrier, with BME staff reporting routine circumvention of procedures because 'key posts are already identified to particular people through ring fencing. People are encouraged and appointed according to whether their face fits' (Commission for Black Staff in Further Education, 2002 p51). One BME female middle manager assessed that career progression was limited to 'certain jobs they will put us into' (Mackay and Etienne, 2006 p21) whereas her white counterparts 'can move through the system quite easily. They have friends and colleagues who make it all right for them - I mean quite literally make it all right' (p22). Another BME female middle manager assessed that her white peers did not accept her professional competencies:

> They probably looked down on me and thought, 'My God, they have sent this black woman in and what does she know' (Mackay and Etienne, 2006 p16).

Another explained her understandings:

> Some people don't like being managed by a black person. It could be because they never have had a black manager before, it could be that they are scared and it could be that they are racist (Mackay and Etienne, 2006 p15).

Confirming this understanding, a white senior leader in FE admitted his tendency to select homogenous management teams:

> You tend to appoint one of your own… Someone from a different ethnic background… might see things quite differently to you' (Morrison et al, 2006 p286).

Such homophily blocks the legitimate aspirations of BME staff (Lumby, 2006).

2.4.3.5 Lack of role models and pressure to act as tokens

'Holding power continues to be an "extraordinary" situation for women… They are largely recruited from a very specific group of women: white, middle or upper class, and in most cases by definition highly credentialled' (Reay and Ball, 2000 p147). Nevertheless, 'the symbolic value of senior women role models…is important for women's perceptions that the barriers to their progression within the organisation are permeable' (Collins and Singh, 2006 p26). But where there are no women role models, and therefore white men are the main role models, this can enhance women's perceptions of management as both masculine (Al-Khalifa, 1989) and white (Davidson, 1997; Mackay and Etienne, 2006). Many BME women, unable to identify role models at work, identified BME role models from their childhood, including their mothers (Davidson, 1997). Further, only 43% of BME women managers had ever had any kind of mentor as compared with 87% of their white female counterparts (Davidson, 1997). This was explained by the fact that most senior

managers are white and male, and whilst cross-gender mentoring was accepted, cross-gender and cross-racial mentoring can create difficult workplace dynamics (Davidson, 1997; Johnson-Bailey and Cervero, 2004). Thus the intersectionality of race/ethnicity and gender identities plays out to the detriment of BME women.

Women head teachers felt tokenised, perceiving they had to 'prove their worth in a management position' (Fuller, 2009 p28). BME women in FE experienced similar pressure:

> There was very much a feeling that if you did get a job as a manager you would have to do well at it otherwise you would be letting the side down as a black manager (Mackay and Etienne, 2006 p17).

Many pressures on tokenised women apply similarly to both white and BME women, including high visibility, lack of role models and gender stereotyping, but tokenised BME women additionally faced racial stereotyping, ghettoisation and being regarded as a test case for other BME women (Kanter 1997). 'We symbolise the hope or promise that whiteness is being undone' (Ahmed, 2009 p41).

2.4.3.6 The long hours culture

Recent years have seen 'a particular form of aggressive, often sexualised masculinity being associated with jobs…which involved plenty of socialising and working long hours, so that women are often regarded as being out of place or not quite right for the job, or made to feel they have to perform on male terms' (Leonard, 1998 p75). Some women in FE reported this long hours culture as a significant barrier to progression to senior leadership

(Women's Leadership Network, 2010). A BME female FE manager described how black staff 'are the next in after the cleaners and the last out of the door' (Mackay and Etienne, 2006 p18). Other barriers related to restrictions on women's agency.

2.4.3.7 Family and domestic responsibilities

Some of the literature posits that women's career ambitions are significantly curtailed by family responsibilities. Gronn (1999a) proposes four reasons why women do not progress to leadership:

> First, despite the structural breakthroughs, informal organisational factors (such as a culture of male bloody-mindedness) conspire to thwart the aspirations and best endeavours of able and well qualified women: second, such women may lack the ambition and related personal attributes required to guarantee career mobility and success: three, career options and advancement still tend to be impeded by an intolerable burden of domestic and family commitments: four, a combination of some or all of these possibilities (Gronn, 1999a p104).

Gronn's (1999a) analysis is inconsistent with Evett's (1990) typology within which women teachers adjusted to their dual roles as parents and teachers, and is also contested in the context of FE, where structural barriers are identified as paramount (Wild, 1994; Prichard and Deem, 1999; Mackay and Etienne, 2006). Whilst women acknowledged their childcare responsibilities they did not accept that they prevented them from pursuing their careers in FE, and many successfully balanced family and career (Shain, 2000).

2.4.3.8 Role identity transformation

The challenge of 'role identity transformation' (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003 p495) from teacher to leader constitutes a barrier for some aspiring leaders. 'A

leader must construct an identity performance to take up the role of leader'
(Lumby and English, 2009 p95). Successful transformation is founded on self-
belief relating to the ability to adapt to the demands of leadership (Browne-
Ferrigno, 2003). Becoming a leader in FE relates to 'a subject position'
(Prichard and Deem, 1999 p327) within which the postholder has to reconcile
the 'audit, funding and planning practices' (p328) along with 'their resonance
with other subject positions' (p328). One FE middle manager described her
struggle to transform her identity in the context of marketisation: 'I care about
education, I care about my staff, but I am paid to care about the economic
plight that all FE colleges are in' (Prichard and Deem, 1999 p338). Others
rejected identity transformation to senior leadership because of ideological
opposition to managerialism (Gleeson and Shain, 1999; Prichard and Deem,
1999).

2.4.3.9 Lack of self-belief

'Many viable candidates…never apply because of self-doubts about their
leadership abilities' (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003 p497). Lack of self-belief acted as
a barrier to some women's progression to school headships (Fuller, 2009),
based on self-perceptions of whether they were 'ready, willing and able to do
the job' (Hall, 1996 p61). Boulton and Coldron's (1998) case study of 'a
confident, ambitious, well qualified school teacher' (p149) demonstrates how
lack of support from peers and lack of encouragement from the head led to
loss of self-belief and abandonment of previous ambitions towards leadership.

Research suggests that BME women managers tend to develop and maintain
high levels of self-belief (Davidson, 1997) despite some BME girls having

experienced low expectations of their future potential during schooling (Phoenix, 2009). The BME women built their own self-belief, supported by family, friendships and professional networks in order to resist 'representations of themselves as innately incapable' (Phoenix, 2009 p101). Some BME women undertaking teacher training reported experiencing racism and negativity during teaching practice (Kohli, 2009). Rather than being undermined, their self-belief was enhanced because their experiences highlighted the importance of becoming teachers and role models for BME pupils, and they also wanted to help white staff to 'understand the pain of racism in order not to perpetuate it' (Kohli, 2009 p235). Thus they overturned the negative impact of racism and used it to fuel self-belief and to support their role identity transformation to teachers.

2.4.3.10 Summing up barriers to career progression

'Think manager, think white male' (Davidson, 1997 p88). The literature identifies a significant range of barriers faced by white and BME women in progressing towards leadership, whilst BME women's intersectional identities result in them facing the additional barrier of racism. Barriers including managerialism, sexism and racism are structural, whilst others such as lack of self-belief and the inability to transform role identities relate to women's agency. Further, whilst both women and men had to adapt to the new ways of working in FE, women assessed that they faced greater barriers because of masculinist leadership culture and orthodoxy. Almost twenty years after incorporation, the overall impact of barriers still serves to reduce the pool of white and BME women leaders and potential leaders within FE.

2.5 SUMMARISING KEY THEMES FROM THE LITERATURE

The key concepts underpinning this research relate to identities around gender, membership of a racial/ethnic minority group in the UK, and leadership in the FE sector. The first main section of this chapter delineated the impact of major changes in college governance and management resulting from the incorporation of colleges under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. The literature revealed that although women form the majority of the FE workforce they are under-represented within both governance and leadership, and BME women are significantly under-represented at all levels. This presented the context within which participants' accounts of how they developed and enacted leadership in FE can be interpreted and understood.

The concepts of gender and racial/ethnic identities formed the second main section, where it is posited that identities are individually and socially constructed. Gender is analysed as performative, based on discourse and social interaction (Butler, 1990; West and Zimmerman, 1991; Francis, 1999; Lumby, 2009) and displayed through the social categories which a person verifies in their performative life (Butler, 2004). Francis (2010) emphasises the importance of context in understanding the characteristics of leaders. The literature demonstrates that college leaders responded to the context of marketisation by adopting masculinist management styles, creating gendered environments which favoured masculinist practices (Kerfoot and Whitehead, 1998; Cole, 2000; Shain, 2000). Although Collard (2001) warns against creating essentialist stereotypes of male and female leaders, college leaders

formulated a social order within which women's sex was seen as detrimental to their abilities to enact leadership (Bourdieu, 2001; Butler, 2004).

The chapter next explored racial/ethnic identities. Whilst acknowledging that race is a socially constructed concept, researchers accept that raced practices pervade the lived experiences of BME people in the UK and therefore socially constructed racial/ethnic identities impact on schooling and opportunities in the workplace (Bell, 2003; Bush et al, 2005; Warmington, 2009). Within a society in which the social order functions to ratify whiteness (Troyna, 1998), cultural linguistic and negative frameworks surround people whose status is viewed as different (Crenshaw, 1991). The literature review demonstrated that FE leadership is dominated by white males (Frearson, 2003; Women's Leadership Network, 2012). BME women who aspire to progress within areas dominated by white male leadership orthodoxy face barriers based on their dual identities as women and members of BME groups (Crenshaw, 1991; Basit, 2012). The intersection of racism and sexism results in their exclusion or marginalisation (Crenshaw, 1991). However, Butler (2004) acknowledged that differences based on gender which others might perceive to be important in the social construction of identity may become subsumed by common purpose, creating ties which can cross gender boundaries. By extension, it could be argued that common purpose may also create ties between women across racial/ethnic boundaries, affording opportunities to develop an inclusive discourse amongst those who share a vision of a new social order (The London Feminist Salon Collective, 2004). In this way, white and BME women's voices can interject into white masculinist leadership discourses.

The chapter then explored understandings of leadership, mapping theoretical understandings from structuralist models through to distribution (Gronn, 2000; Northouse, 2001; Fullan, 2001). Having critiqued business models of leadership which played out in the public sector following marketisation (Gunter, 1997; Hallinger and Snidvongs, 2008), the chapter advocates an inclusive model of leadership which takes account of context (Gunter and Ribbins, 2002; Lumby, 2006; Rayner, 2009).   Such a model departs from notions of white male leadership orthodoxy and provides spaces for leaders from all backgrounds to embed their visions, values and practices (Warmington, 2009), thus enabling white and BME women to contribute to leadership discourses. It then follows that leadership development needs to be similarly conceptualised as inclusive and contextual. The chapter offered a critique of leadership development programmes within the FE sector which assume a skills-based leadership orthodoxy and lack any focus on diversity. The literature highlights the need for talent management and leadership development initiatives which embed understandings of diversity into the development of all leaders (Lumby and Coleman, 2007; Rhodes, 2012). These are important issues for any new approach to FE leadership development.

Understandings of career were next explored in the context of gender, race/ethnicity and progression to leadership. The literature demonstrates that women benefit from various sources of support in developing their careers and also face many barriers if they aspire to progress to leadership (Hall, 1996; Davidson, 1997). Women generally face the barrier of sexism whilst BME

women face the additional barrier of racism, based on their intersectional identities. The chapter has highlighted differences in the literature relating to the interplay between agency and structure between those who attribute women's under-representation in leadership to women's agency and those who see structural barriers as the greater barrier (Evetts, 1990; Gronn, 1999a; Shain, 2000; Mackay and Etienne, 2006; Sargeant, 2007). Little is known about why women choose careers in FE, and this gap helps to justify this study.

Thus the key concepts around which this study has been conceptualised involve identities constructed around gender, race/ethnicity and leadership careers in the context of post-incorporated FE. Having reviewed the literature which underpins these concepts, the next chapter details the research methods and methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins by detailing the research questions underpinning this study. The next section considers key paradigms which offer theoretical frameworks for knowledge production, locating this study within subjectivist research. Epistemology within the interpretative paradigm is then explored, justifying the use of life stories within interpretative research and explaining the heuristic framework of career (Gronn and Ribbins, 1996) around which the findings are analysed. The third section depicts the methodology and methods, explaining survey methodology and detailing the methods of postal questionnaires and semi-structured interviews used in this research. This section also explains the process of managing text and creating data and considers issues of reliability, validity and trustworthiness. The fourth section focuses on ethical considerations and includes a discussion of the epistemological implications of insider-outsider status. The fifth section offers an evaluation of the research design, and the final section signposts towards the findings in Chapter Four.

3.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The literature review in Chapter Two analysed the structural changes in governance and management resulting from the incorporation of colleges, revealing that women are significantly under-represented within college leadership. It highlighted a tendency for FE leadership studies to focus on leadership either without reference to gender or race/ethnicity or by

separately focusing on gender or on race/ethnicity. Further, most studies relating to leaders and leading in FE either investigated the impact of managerialism or they explored white or BME women's agency. The absence of a discourse within the literature uniting the voices of women from all backgrounds within FE leadership debates and embracing both structure and agency was a notable gap to which I wanted to contribute. The research questions were formulated to enable me to explore white and BME women's experiences as they developed and enacted leadership within FE and were based on the career life framework first posited by Gronn and Ribbins (1996).

The first research question asks:

❑ What were the factors which influenced the participants' early ambitions and why did they choose to work within the FE sector?

The literature review revealed that women form the majority of the FE workforce but very little is known about why women chose careers in FE. This question was designed to contribute to this gap in knowledge by gaining understandings of factors influencing participants' career choices. This relates to the formation phase of career (Gronn and Ribbins, 1996).

The second research question asks:

❑   How do participants construct the notion of a career in FE in relation to their own biographies and what factors have inhibited or supported career development?

Research in the aftermath of incorporation revealed a range of barriers and sources of support which white women experienced, whilst a separate body of literature exposed the experiences of BME people in FE. Notably, these discourses were exclusive and some tended to focus solely on structure whilst others related to agency. I wanted to develop further understandings of barriers together with sources of support which sustained career development in the accession phase (Gronn and Ribbins, 1996) and to explore whether there were differences between the experiences of white and BME women.

The third research question asks:

❑   What strategies and tactics did participants adopt in engaging with the organisational culture within FE?

The literature review revealed a range of responses to the managerialist organisational culture within FE but these were not contextualised with regard to women. This question aims to provide insights into the responses to managerialism of women from both white and BME backgrounds as they describe and define them in the accession and incumbency phases (Gronn and Ribbins, 1996) of their leadership careers.

The fourth research question asks:

❑ How do participants report their experiences of leadership within the organisational culture within FE, and how do these experiences relate to academic theories of leadership?

The literature review highlighted that masculinist approaches to leadership and leadership development became embedded in incorporated colleges. Given women's under-representation within FE leadership, this research question seeks to highlight and foreground women's leadership experiences in the incumbency phase (Gronn and Ribbins, 1996) and to raise issues relating to approaches to leadership development in the sector.

The fifth research question asks:

❑ What were the consequences for participants of their experience of and engagement with the organisational culture within FE?

The literature review highlighted both the shortage of aspiring leaders in the FE sector and the under-representation of both white and BME women within the leadership cohort. This research question seeks to contribute to understandings of under-representation, linking participants' experiences as leaders to their future ambitions in the divestiture phase (Gronn and Ribbins, 1996). These five research questions informed my ontological and epistemological approaches.

3.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

3.2.1 Introduction

Every approach to research involves assumptions about the nature of what is being studied and the means through which knowledge can be acquired. These shape the framing of research questions, the methods used to

investigate these questions and the relationship between researcher and

researched (Robson, 2002; Denscombe, 2003; McLean, 2004).

3.2.2 Positivism

The positivist paradigm adopts a scientific approach to research and

includes the theoretical strands of structuralism (Sturrock, 2003) and

functionalism (Giddens, 1993; Hartley, 2002). The cognitive interest is

technical (Habermas, 1971) and the knowledge produced is evaluative or

instrumental (Gunter and Ribbins, 2002). Research within the positivist

paradigm supports inquiries seeking to produce knowledge which can be

scientifically justified or generalised and reproduced. This paradigm,

applied to the field of educational research, is summarised in Table 3.

Table 3: Indicative theoretical strands, cognitive interest and knowledge
domains within the positivist paradigm relating to educational leadership
(adapted from Hartley, 2010)

OBJECTVIST EPISTEMOLOGY	**Paradigm:** Positivist	Styles of research which rely on measurement, statistics and other things associated with scientific method (Denscombe, 2003)
	Theoretical strand: *Functionalism*	Theoretical strand which studies events in the belief that they can best be understood based on the functions they perform (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Giddens,1993)
	Theoretical strand: *Structuralism*	Theoretical strand which studies objects or systems as wholes in the belief that beneath superficial variety there is an underlying unity (Sturrock, 2003)
	Cognitive interest	Technical (Habermas, 1971)
	Knowledge domain: *Instrumental*	Providing leaders with strategies and tactics to deliver organisational goals (Ribbins and Gunter, 2002; Ribbins, 2006)
	Knowledge domain: *Evaluative*	Measuring the impact and effectiveness of leadership and delivering change (Ribbins and Gunter 2002; Ribbins, 2006)

3.2.3 Interpretivism

Subjectivist research epistemology includes the interpretative paradigm within which 'the significance of multiple perspectives and different social constructions of reality' (Watson and Crossley, 2001 p114) can be highlighted. Phenomenology, which embraces narrated stories and reflective accounts of experiences, forms an important theoretical strand within the interpretative paradigm, leading to humanistic or conceptual knowledge (Ribbins and Gunter, 2002) where the cognitive interest is practical or understanding because the logic of social explanation is pluralistic (Habermas, 1971, 1987). Foucault (1972) highlights a dichotomy between the mode of being a knowing subject and being the object of knowledge, and this duality between the person as an object of scrutiny and the person as a reflective agent enables the social world to be the object of study. The mode of inquiry is hermeneutic (Erben, 1996) and the research places importance on the subjective meanings which people ascribe to themselves and others (Pring, 2000).

Phenomenology applied to educational leadership is summarised in Table 4.

Table 4: Exemplar theoretical strand, cognitive interest and knowledge domains within the interpretative paradigm (adapted from Hartley, 2010)

S U B J E C T I V I S T E P I S T E M	**Paradigm:** Interpretative	Knowledge derived from interpretative research is concerned with understanding the essence of the every day world and places importance on subjective meanings and social relationships (Schutz, 1970; Denscombe, 2002)
	Theoretical strand: *Phenomenology*	Theoretical strand based on the reflective accounts of things experienced and how they are constructed, acknowledging that the researched bring their own preconceptions to any situation (Schutz, 1970; Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Pring, 2000; Denscombe, 2003)
	Cognitive interest:	Practical/ understanding (Habermas, 1971, 1987)
	Knowledge domain: *Humanistic*	Describing, understanding and analysing leaders' experiences through biographical studies and interviews (Ribbins and Gunter, 2002; Ribbins, 2006)

O L G Y	Knowledge domain: *Conceptual*	Intellectual approach to the analysis of values through the interplay between agency and structure (Ribbins and Gunter, 2002; Ribbins, 2006)

The life world is a social world within which 'even the socially most stereotyped cultural ideas only exist in the minds of the individuals who absorb them' (Schutz, 1970 p17). Accounts are therefore emic in that they describe meanings from within a culture (Pike, 1967), so a person moving to a new community has to observe and reconstruct the rules required for survival in that community. Riley (1988, cited in Popkewitz, 1999) posits that the concept of *woman* historically places women in spaces through which they are to be seen and to see themselves as acting subjects, therefore spaces within which women were enclosed such as family, church and school were the effects of power. Foucault (1972) identified breaks and ruptures in these social spaces as change which impacted on power. This raises interesting issues about the spaces for white and BME women who move into white male dominated environments.

3.2.4 Radical humanism

The radical humanist paradigm is also located within qualitative research. Humanism 'is concerned with the subjective construction of experiences through an agent's location in the world, and how the agent engages over time with the structures that seek to shape and determine action' (Ribbins, 2006 p120). Radical humanism leads to critical or axiological knowledge (Gunter and Ribbins, 2002) and promotes working for change, so the cognitive interest is emancipatory (Habermas, 1971). Ontological assumptions are based on the

existence of multiple realities shaped by an observable web of relations linked to social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic and gender values (Pring, 2000). These lead to differential systems of recognition and distinctions which divide and organise people's participation (Bourdieu, 1984). 'Ethnic identity and gender identity are two major ways in which people define themselves and are defined by others… Identity is especially relevant because it influences our sense of self in regard to capabilities, motivation and goals, all of which influence capacity for leadership' (Vasquez and Comas-Diaz, 2007 p268). English law has over time recognised gender and racial identity by bestowing distinctive rights. For completeness, the history of this recognition process is mapped in Appendix 3 (page 258).

3.2.4.1 Critical theory

The epistemological assumptions of critical theory involve links between researcher and participants based on analytical critique and historical analysis, interrogating and critiquing ideological and political stances so that

 'field members ask questions about power relationships within and external to activity and actions' (Gunter, 2005 p166). Social positions and power relationships structure social processes (Gunter, 2000) so that 'understanding the production of knowledge requires an understanding of dominant elite groups, not least how history can "other" women, and bleach out issues of colour' (Gunter, 2006 p207). Feminists assert that social reality is embedded in relations of power and attest the value of diverse local stories (McLean, 2004). Hence engaging with leaders can focus discussion and also influence future practice with regard to diversity (Lumby and Coleman, 2007).

3.2.4.2 Critical race theory

The term *race* is highly contested, and issues relating to the use of language in the context of race have already been raised in Chapter Two. Critical race theory can 'assist in examining the ways in which "race" and racism intersect with gender and class … in shaping social interactions' (Maylor, 2009 p54). It attacks Bourdieu's (2001) theory of cultural capital because this has been used to propose that some communities have greater cultural wealth than others, tending towards value judgements based on white middle class cultures. Popkewitz (1999) cites US research which revealed a 'scaffold of ideas' (p33) about childhood, teaching and school management which combined to restrict the space for black children, who were 'divided and positioned as different from the normal in a way which was not overt but which embodied the universal norms of sameness nonetheless' (p33). Hence any tendency to 'normalise whiteness' (Warmington, 2009 p292) endangers social justice.

Critical race theory requires educational policies and practices to be 'developed and enacted to bring about significant change that re-centres the experiences and best interests of people of colour' (Hughes and Giles, 2010 p47). Social evolution instils 'the idea of difference from the norms of sameness' (Popkewitz, 1999 p32) but 'choice assumes erroneously that the available distinctions are equally available for all people in all social circumstances' (p31). Kohli (2009) centralises race in critical theory whilst also 'acknowledging the intersection of race with other forms of subordination'

(p238). Importantly, 'applying critical race theory…to Black women's experiences is crucial if shared knowledge and understandings about Black women's experiences, the meanings they give to these experiences, and the discriminations they struggle with are to develop' (Maylor, 2009 p54).

Thus critical race theory challenges 'the dominant perspective' (Kohli, 2009 p238) which tends to be a white perspective within educational research (Hughes and Giles, 2010), insisting that discourses should embrace race as well as gender (Maylor, 2009). Critical race theory rejects 'the assumption of a colour blind society… and recognises that racism, both structural and personal, is alive and well' (Hughes and Giles, 2010 p47). Critical race theory promotes story telling (Maylor, 2009) about the 'lives, experiences and daily environments of people of colour who suffer from and offer resistance to oppressive systematic pressures that manifest in various ways on their personal and collective lives' (Hughes and Giles, 2010 p46). Table 5 summarises this conceptual framework.

Table 5: Indicative theoretical strands, cognitive interest and knowledge domains within the radical humanist paradigm (adapted from Hartley, 2010)

S U B J E C T I V I S T E P I S T E	**Paradigm:** Radical humanism	Knowledge derived contributes towards and supports working for change by overthrowing or transcending limitations or existing social arrangements (Ribbins, 2006; Lumby and Coleman, 2007)
	Theoretical strand: *Critical race theory*	Theoretical strand which offers a social justice framework (Kohli, 2009; Warmington, 2009; Hughes and Giles, 2010)
	Cognitive interest:	Emancipatory (Habermas, 1971)
	Knowledge domain: *Critical*	Revealing injustice and oppression through structures of power with emancipatory aims (Cohen et al, 2000; Ribbins and Gunter, 2002; Gunter, 2005; Maylor, 2009)

M O L O G Y	Knowledge domain: *Axiological*	Clarifying values to determine what is right and good regarding leaders and leadership (Popkewitz, 1999; Ribbins, 2006; Kohli, 2009)

3.2.4.3 Mixing research paradigms

Although traditionally each paradigm is delineated separately, there are studies where the research aims overlap paradigms and the knowledge created falls into more than one knowledge domain. Although some researchers assert that mixed paradigm research is conceptually flawed (Kushner, 2001), Greene et al (2001) persuasively argue 'the need to make use of all our methodological expertise and skills in this endeavour for contemporary understanding of social issues' (p25). People cannot always be placed into the controlled environments which positivism requires but have subjective feelings which may impact on the research (Denscombe, 2002). Habermas (2003) proposes 'a pragmatic epistemological realism' (p7) whilst Smeyers (2001) pleads for 'paradigmatic tolerance' (p477) within educational research. Thus studies exploring the impact of both structure and agency within educational leadership can be coherent even though it could be argued that structuralism is objectivist and agency is subjectivist (Ribbins and Gunter, 2002). Notably Usher (1996b) denies the validity of any distinction between objective and subjective knowledge, positing that issues of reflexivity are central to those of textuality.   The researcher's own values and standpoints are reflected in the choice of topics and approaches, so that 'lived experience is mediated by languages and discourses' (Usher, 1996b p37) which underpin ontological and epistemological assumptions. Since research aims are key to the relative

merits of positivist and qualitative paradigms, mixed method work can provide 'enhanced validity, greater comprehensiveness of findings, more insightful understandings and increased value consciousness and diversity' (Greene et al, 2001 p30).

3.2.5 Positioning this study

Given that this study aims to interpret the experiences of women leaders in FE, it adopts a humanistic approach through the theoretical strand of phenomenology, which locates the study within the interpretative paradigm. However, because both white and BME women are under-represented in college leadership (Women's Leadership Network, 2012), the research also seeks to give voice to white and BME women leaders and address policy makers and others who are concerned with leadership development, and in so doing has emancipatory aims. These aspects of the study connect to critical theory and critical race theory within the radical humanism paradigm. Thus the study can be located across two paradigms, because the interpretative knowledge can generate both humanistic and emancipatory findings.

3.2.6 Epistemology

The epistemological stance underpinning this study is to accept that there are multiple realities within social settings and that to understand events you must see them through the eyes of participants (Denscombe, 2003). This approach to epistemology necessarily requires research tools and techniques which measure what exists (McLean, 2004). There cannot be

objective knowledge about social phenomena because no-one has exactly the same life experiences, but there can be a collective or consensual view surrounding their reality which gives rise to a kind of objectivity implicit in the existence of shared language and social norms (Pring, 2000). People tend to fall into groups and it is possible to make generalised statements about these groups, building up a theoretical picture to explain typical behaviour (Pring, 2000). Adler et al's (1993) rejection of 'white solipsism – the tendency to think, imagine and speak as if whiteness described the world' (p48) encouraged me to include both white and BME women. Thus knowledge of women's leadership is derived from the construction of interpretative understandings based on their narrated stories of their interactions in colleges. Usher's (1996a) analysis of feminist approaches to the relationship between epistemology and methodology guided my decision not to compare the experiences of women with those of men.

This study responds to demands for a changing discourse on educational leadership (Hall, 1996) and to critiques raised by black feminists regarding 'the invisibility of Black women's experiences and knowledge in white feminist discourse' (Maylor, 2009 p53). We need 'to recognise the limitations of our own perspective and become open to the value of an alternative point of view' (Vlieghe, 2010 p166), therefore interpretations of the narratives are not epistemologically blind to issues of race and racism and do not seek to prioritise white understandings. I am mindful of the dangers in seeking to reach an artificial consensus whereby the distinctive voices of difference are not heard (Lumby and Coleman, 2007). Rather, the

differences between white and BME women's ways of knowing, acting and leading offer the possibility of 'the disruption of binaries such as either/or, us/them, me/other and so forth… and the in-between space offers the disruption and displacement of hegemonic theories' (Fitzgerald, 2010 p103). This study explores whether the dichotomies between the experiences of BME women leaders and their white counterparts can be deconstructed and reconstructed as continuities within new discourses. I wanted to avoid the epistemological isolation which can result from 'ignoring the condition of anyone but ourselves' (Bridges, 2001 p381). 'It is in talking to each other…that we construct the conceptual apparatus that allows us to understand our own situation in relation to others – and this is a construction which involves understanding differences as well as similarities' (Bridges, 2001 p373). Ties created with others who share political understandings and resistance against the existing social order, notwithstanding insider or outsider status, enable 'a communising and equalising experience, an experience that we cannot argue with, and that makes us responsible to and for each other and the world' (Vlieghe, 2010 p161).

3.2.7 Contribution of life stories to leadership studies

3.2.7.1 Life stories and leadership development

Biographic research offers a focus on 'how a complex professional life unfolds' (Gunter, 2001 p58), promoting understandings of 'the importance of context in the social construction of leaders and leadership systems' (Gronn and Ribbins, 1996 p452). 'The career trajectories and practice of field

members can be inter-related with wider lives, institutional location and policy context' (Gunter, 2006 p202) and set in 'contemporary cultural and structural settings' (Roberts, 2002 p1), although for an *in situ* leader, 'ideological renunciation may only follow retirement' (Faraday and Plummer, 1979 p134). From an ontological perspective, biographical studies can 'facilitate theorising about leadership' (Ribbins, 2003 p59) and demonstrate leadership development through the process of change 'both in episodic encounters and in longer lasting socialisation processes' (Jackson, 1968 p72). Life stories offer emic accounts from the actors' perspectives (Pike, 1967), therefore 'the life story has to be culturally located as we pursue our understandings' (Goodson, 2006 p15) because narratives draw on culturally available resources (Burgess and Ivanic, 2010). Life stories 'shed light on the process of survival' (Lord and Preston, 2009 p770), enabling us 'to gain insights into individuals coming to terms with imperatives in the social structures…and develop our understanding from a base that is clearly grounded within personal biography and perception' (Goodson, 1991 p134). 'Although one story might be dismissed as mere anecdote, two begin research and three make a thesis' (Thody, 1997 p335).

Life stories form a resource for leaders and aspiring leaders because the stories often move from events to analysis and reflection, enabling readers to add hermeneutic value by considering how they would respond (Danzig, 1999). There is 'a continuous interplay between ends and means' (Rayner, 2009 p438), thus praxis is developed through retrospective critical reflection.

Leadership includes 'learning to analyse prior experiences in order better to understand how they shape future courses of actions' (Danzig, 1999 p130), so current leaders' accounts of early events can 'help them understand themselves better' (Busher, 2003 p9). 'Narration is not only about the construction of a particular version of one's life, it is at the same time a construction of a particular version of the self' (Biesta et al, 2008 p7).

3.2.7.2 Life stories and gender

The life stories of women leaders may be particularly valuable to other women who challenge white male leadership orthodoxy and dominant masculinist discourses (Day and Bakioglu, 1996; Leonard, 1998). 'Storytelling can connect an individual's experience in leadership with the literature on women's leadership as a way of further exposing and understanding gendered organisational practices' (Lord and Preston, 2009 p769), providing 'language and frameworks that enable the gendered nature of women's leadership experiences to be shared and understood' (p771).

3.2.7.3 Race/ethnicity and life stories

Narratives and story telling give voice to 'victims of racism' (Hughes and Giles, 2010 p44) and make meaning of the 'persistent phenomena of both individual and systematic racism' (p44). Illustratively, narratives describing the UK schooling experiences of a group of black female migrants disclosed 'racist discourses from teachers and other children' (Phoenix, 2009 p101) but these women reported their agency 'in resisting subjection into representations of

themselves as innately incapable' (p101). Narratives of BME teachers'
experiences of racism in schools provide 'a valuable asset in the fight for
educational justice' (Kohli, 2009 p235) and could help educators from all racial
backgrounds to understand the 'pain of racism in order not to perpetuate it'
(p235). Such emancipatory accounts offer all leaders insights into racist
educational practices (Bell, 2003) which they might then challenge in pursuit of
'racial and social justice' (Hughes and Giles, 2010 p46). Thus 'race becomes a
progressive pedagogic principle, not merely something to be overcome'
(Warmington, 2009 p295).

3.2.7.4 Limitations of life stories

The value of life studies is contested because narrators' perceptions of and
relationship to the researcher could affect what they choose to reveal (Song
and Parker, 1995). 'In telling about the past the narrator must decide what to
make of the past narratively at the moment of telling… This means that life
narratives …indicate something about the narrator's assumptions about the
norm and the normal' (Biesta et al, 2008 p8). Because data collected through
narration are uncorroborated (Busher, 2003) some researchers believe the
method is unreliable (Giddens, 1993). Nevertheless, Thody (1997) values the
use of stories 'first as art, second for research, and third for teaching' (p327).

As explained in Chapter Two, in eliciting and later analysing the narratives, I
found it helpful to collect and analyse the stories around a heuristic framework
of career, which is next delineated.

3.2.8 Heuristic framework of career

A longitudinal framework within which to analyse leaders' biographies was proposed by Gronn and Ribbins (1996), refined later by Gronn (1999b) and further by Ribbins (2003). This framework, which focuses on four stages of career, affords a useful structure within which careers can be analysed. The formation stage explores the influence of family, school and reference groups. The accession stage maps progression towards leadership. The incumbency phase relates to enacting leadership, whilst the divestiture phase explores moving on from leadership. Drawing on Hall's (1996) model in tracing the paths of six white women head teachers, I constructed research instruments using this heuristic framework, adapted to meet the aims of this study. I used the formation phase (Gronn and Ribbins, 1996) to explore family and school expectations towards educational achievement and career. I adapted and used the accession phase (Gronn and Ribbins, 1996) to explore why participants chose to enter FE. I used the accession and incumbency phases (Gronn and Ribbins, 1996) to explore what barriers and sources of support participants encountered on their journeys towards leadership, and their experiences as leaders in FE. My research aims led me to widen the scope of the divestiture phase (Gronn and Ribbins, 1996) to explore participant's future career aims after they were interviewed, including whether they aspired to become college principals. This adapted framework helped me to formulate the research questions and collect and analyse stories in the pilot interviews, providing a helpful structure within which participants' accounts could be located and understood, so I carried forward this approach. I acknowledge limitations in adopting this structured

approach to data collection and analysis because it pre-suggests patterns, imposing the kind of conceptual framework critiqued by Thomas (1998). However, I wanted to explore whether there were themes and trends within the narratives and found this framework helpful in producing findings. It enabled me to link participants' experiences to different phases of their careers as leaders in FE and enabled me to produce findings which demonstrate the impact of these experiences on future career ambition.

3.3 METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

3.3.1 Introduction

The appropriateness of the methodology and methods adopted in research flows from the ontological assumptions. Interpretivist approaches are based on a world of ideas and meanings (Robson, 2002), and surveys offer a methodology which includes methods such as questionnaires which facilitate obtaining a breadth of view, and interviews which enable the researcher to collect reflective accounts of experiences (Ribbins and Gunter, 2002; Denscombe, 2003).

3.3.2 Surveys

3.3.2.1 Introduction

Surveys offer a research methodology whereby the researcher can obtain 'a snapshot at a given point in time' (Denscombe, 2003 p7). Postal questionnaires constitute one method within survey methodology, and

although the response rate may be low, they can provide useful data at low cost in terms of time and money (Denscombe, 2003).

3.3.2.2 Postal questionnaire

I designed a postal questionnaire with the dual purpose of identifying potential participants who might contribute to the research and providing contextual information regarding women's representation in FE leadership. Using the Educational Authorities Directory and Annual (2004), I identified that there were twelve general FE colleges within the West Midlands, an area accessible from my home and workplace. I sent these colleges an information letter and questionnaire (Appendix 4, page 264) requesting information about the numbers, roles and ethnicity of women members of senior management teams. To encourage responses, I undertook to send an analysis of the representation of white and BME women leaders in the West Midlands which colleges could use to support equality and diversity benchmarking. I addressed the correspondence to the head of the human resources department in each college. Through my insider status I knew that human resource departments could derive the requested information from the Staff Information Records (SIR) data sets which colleges were required to submit to the LSC annually, so I mirrored SIR terminology on the questionnaire. The initial letter provided seven responses, and a reminder letter (Appendix 5, page 267) produced three further responses, although one college gave very limited information because of their interpretation of data protection rules. This response rate (83%) was very high for a postal questionnaire (Denscombe, 2003). Analysis of the data, which is presented

in Chapter Four, was sent to all twelve colleges in the West Midlands area, and I used the responses to begin to identify potential participants.

3.3.2.3 Interviews

Interviews constitute a further method within survey methodology although they can also be regarded as part of biographical methodology. Robson (2002) identifies three types of interviews - fully structured, semi-structured and unstructured. Fully structured interviews involve fixed questions to collect standardised responses, often from a large group of interviewees, which can then be coded and analysed using computer software (Denscombe, 2003). This type of interview does not support exploring individual understandings and interpretations so was not appropriate for my research aims.

Unstructured and semi-structured interviews can support a phenomenological research strategy because they enable participants to focus on their interpretation of events. In unstructured interviews, the interviewer introduces a theme or topic which the interviewee develops freely (Denscombe, 2003). I rejected this method because of the risk that participants may take a direction leading away from my research aims so that I might fail to collect the information sought. Semi-structured interviews begin with predetermined questions which can be modified by the interviewer in response to issues raised by the interviewee, who is encouraged to elaborate on topics and provide more open responses (Robson, 2002). This is much valued by Pring (2000):

> It gives the scope for those interviewed to expound the full
> significance of their actions. If you believe that the significance or

> the 'meaning' of what is done lies in the ideas, intentions, values and beliefs of the agent, then those ideas etc have to be taken into account (Pring, 2000 p39).

I selected this method because it enabled me to use predetermined questions relating to each stage of the heuristic framework of career so as to link the stories to the research questions. 'The best responses are obtained to specific (as opposed to general) questions about important things' (Robson, 2002 p272).   This ensured that each participant responded to the same core set of questions, contributing to the trustworthiness of the research. The semi-structured interviews also enabled me to carry forward relevant issues to subsequent interviews (Erben, 1996), and this enriched the findings. At the same time, I wanted to afford opportunities for participants to reflect on their experiences and comment freely about issues or events in their stories. 'This is the best way of obtaining this type of reflective data' (Withers, 2000 p388). I encouraged interviewees to 'speak their minds' (Denscombe, 2003 p167), using prompts, nods and silences to encourage further disclosures, ensuring that 'the women's ways of relating their stories became the guideline throughout the interviews' (Nilsen, 1994 p103). This supports the hermeneutic value of life stories for aspiring leaders from all backgrounds (Goodson, 1991; Day and Bakioglu, 1996; Danzig, 1999; Lord and Preston, 2009; Phoenix, 2009; Hughes and Giles, 2010).

3.3.3 Sample

In line with my ontological and epistemological stances, I did not need to select a statistical sample because I aimed to gain understandings of participants' experiences in developing and enacting leadership rather than develop reproducible or generalisable theories. Because such studies admit to the existence of multiple realities, they can rely on opportunistic samples rather than the structured samples which positivist approaches require (Denscombe, 2003). My epistemological stance led me to include white and BME women (Bridges, 2001) and I wanted to include women who experienced the immediate aftermath of incorporation and women who entered FE after managerialism became embedded to meet my research aims. To this end, the postal questionnaire requested information on race/ethnicity and dates of appointment. The interviews were conducted in three phases. Whilst initial participants were identified through the postal questionnaire, further participants were identified through snowballing when participants suggested others who might contribute, and the remainder were identified through professional networks. The sample was thus a non-probability purposive sample which is profiled in Tables 6,7 and 8. A short biography of each participant is included in Appendix 6 (page 268).

Table 6: Profile of participants by race/ethnicity

Race/ethnicity	White	BME
Number (%)	11 (69%)	5 (31%)

Table 7: How participants were selected

How selected	White participants	BME participants
Identified through postal survey	6	2
Identified through snowballing	2	1
Identified through networks	3	2

Table 8: Profile of participants by race/ethnicity and leadership experience

Participants	Experience of leadership at or just after incorporation	Progressed to leadership post incorporation
White participants	6	5
BME participants	1	4

3.3.4 Pilot interviews

I conducted pilot interviews with two white and one BME participant which are included in the study. The aims of this pilot were multifaceted. Firstly, the pilot interviews enabled me to practice 'collaborating with the participant … and actively involving the participant in the inquiry as it unfolds' (Ollerenshaw and Creswell, 2002 p332). Secondly, I included a BME woman in the pilot so that I could reflect on my approaches to interviewing BME women, taking account of epistemological issues in relation to outsider status. Thirdly, I tried different ways of recording, including tape recording, taking notes and in one case, at the participant's behest, using her personal assistant to take notes. Fourthly, the pilot phase enabled me to review my research questions and research instruments (Denscombe, 2003). The pilot confirmed that participants understood the questions, thus contributing to the trustworthiness of the study.

The pilot also led to an additional question being included in the interview schedules. Two of the three participants in the pilot interviews raised the issue of their relationships with governors, so I decided to explore this with all subsequent participants. The interview schedules for white and BME participants are included in Appendix 7 (page 275), where the additional topic is noted on the schedules.

3.3.5 Conduct of interviews

I did not assume homogeneity of experience so the interview schedules differed for white and BME women in that I included the additional theme of the impact of race/ethnicity with BME participants (Usher, 1996a; Bridges, 2001; Warmington, 2009) (Appendix 7, page 275). The interviews were conducted flexibly in line with the ontological and epistemological approaches underpinning the study and following Erben's (1996) 'hermeneutical circle' (p160) whereby issues raised by previous participants are explored with subsequent participants. The question relating to governors, which was added after the pilot interviews, demonstrates this approach. My insider status helped me to develop a relationship of trust with each participant to encourage reflection and disclosure, taking advantage of opportunities to:

> Capture…others' meaning depending on all kinds of unarticulated and half articulated signs – the gaze that is a second too long, the gesture, the tone, the intonation, the word used in a special way, the No said to mean Yes (Thomas, 1998 p145).

Interviews were conducted face to face at times and in places selected by participants, and lasted between one hour and one and three quarter hours. The differences in the duration of interviews reflected the extent to which individuals expanded on their experiences or chose to give multiple examples or additional details in response to questions or prompts. At the end of their interviews several participants saluted the importance of the research.

3.3.6 Recording techniques

After the pilot phase I realised the value of tape recording each interview alongside taking written notes.

3.3.7 Creating and managing text

3.3.7.1 Text management

I transcribed each tape recording whilst the details were fresh in my memory, referring to my notes if the tape was indistinct. This maintained confidentiality and helped me become familiar with the narratives. Six participants took advantage of the offer to read the transcripts of their interviews and expressed themselves entirely satisfied with the transcription. An example of a transcript is provided in Appendix 8 (page 279).

Robson (2002) describes various techniques which can assist in analysing text, suggesting the use of notes and interim summaries and the annotation of text using a coding system. Whilst post-modernists see this approach as somewhat mechanistic (Usher, 1996b; Thomas, 1998), Miles and Huberman (1994) assert the value of an organised approach to 'generate meaning' (p245-6). I kept a diary recording decisions made during the research thus creating 'an audit trail' (Denscombe, 2003 p274), and adopted Robson's (2002) techniques where they made it easier to navigate and manage information.

3.3.7.2 Turning people and events into data

3.3.7.2.1 Electronic tools

Computer software packages can facilitate text retrieval, coding and code based theory building (Robson, 2002) but were critiqued as likely to 'presuppose a homogeneity that does not exist' (Smeyers, 2001 p479). I tried some of these tools in the pilot phase but found that the nuances and shades of meaning became lost and that returning to the transcripts was more productive.

3.3.7.2.2 Immersion

I immersed myself in the transcripts, looking for emerging themes and issues.   Thomas (1998) contests the possibility of finding patterns in narratives and questions whether it is possible to interpret participants' evidence rationally, because 'inconsistency is the hallmark of the human worlds' (p143). Oppositionally, Davies (2000) values 'meta-ethnography which enables researchers to summarise and synthesise the findings of qualitative studies …identifying themes, perspectives… and/or concepts' (p371). I looked for patterns, themes and trends whilst avoiding any assumptions that they might exist (Thomas, 1998; Bridges, 2001). I wanted to use participants' own interpretations to produce findings relating to the impact of gender and/or race/ethnicity on their 'work related selves and perceptions of possible achievements' (Busher, 2003 p3). To assist the analysis, I drew up lists of recurring themes and identified stand-alone issues. I used grids to map participants' experiences in each phase of the heuristic career framework (Gronn and Ribbins, 1996), building a map for each participant, then overlaying these to identify themes, trends and issues. Illustratively, the summary of responses to experiences of FE

leadership set out in Chapter Six emerged through mapping career aims and barriers at different career phases.

'Making sense is essentially a matter of constructing meaning' (Walker, 1991 p113). I am mindful of the ethical implications in making judgements about selecting, compressing and juxtaposing the information gained and conscious of the significance of context on participants' narratives and of 'the ways in which these have impacted on self promotion and career construction' (Goodson, 1991 p134). Peshkin (2000) posits that 'a developing interpretation …evolves over the course of the research' (p5) based on the researcher's own journey in reflecting on and interpreting data. I continued to absorb the narratives, taking an iterative approach to confirm the emerging 'themes and interconnections' (Denscombe, 2003 p272) following Erben's (1996) 'hermeneutical circle' (p160). This led to the production and interpretation of data which support the findings.

3.3.8 Reliability, validity and trustworthiness

3.3.8.1 Introduction

Educational research was harshly critiqued by Hargreaves (1996) who described many findings as 'academic Chinese whispers' (p62) whilst Pring (2000) concluded that 'conceptually and philosophically, much research simply does not make sense' (p5). Underlying these critiques are the concepts of reliability, validity and trustworthiness. To defend the field, Ribbins and Gunter (2002) constructed their map of knowledge domains, making explicit the ontological and epistemological basis of educational leadership studies.

These knowledge domains, which for completeness are more fully explained in Appendix 9 (page 298), seek to justify educational leadership studies and the validity and trustworthiness of knowledge generated in the field, refuting any hierarchy of 'domains of understanding' (Smeyers, 2001 p287).

3.3.8.2 Reliability and validity

Reliability of research relates to the possibility of reproducing the results and is linked to knowledge generation through scientific methodology within the positivist paradigm. However, one-to-one interviews encouraging reflection and interpretation of experiences do not produce the consistency and objectivity valued by Hargreaves (1996). Validity of research refers to opportunities to corroborate findings. External validity considers whether findings are generalisable or more widely applicable to other settings. Internal validity examines whether the research design and methods are 'accurate, honest and on target' (Denscombe, 2003 p301). Positivists favour triangulation, which can enhance validity where the findings can be located through several methods such as questionnaires, observations, interviews and documents (Denscombe, 2003). However, this presupposes a single reality whereas phenomenology within qualitative research allows for multiple realities (Schutz, 1970; Pring, 2000). No-one will have the same life experiences and thus no-one will share exactly the same interpretations. Importantly, peoples' worlds are complemented by 'the world of predecessors' (Schutz, 1970 p37), that is, their indirect relationship with others from the past which contributes to their social understandings. Therefore the history of oppression endured by women, and the violations of slavery and colonisation

suffered by BME people, contribute to 'the social distribution of knowledge' (Schutz, 1970 p38). Thus white and BME women's understandings are 'guided by their knowledge of those spheres of social life which are relevant for their own existence' (Schutz, 1970 p38). Transactional epistemology recognises that knowledge and knowing are relative to who is doing the constructing and representing, which gives rise to an interpretative perspective which examines how factors such as gender and race/ethnicity impact on lived experiences.

3.3.8.3 Trustworthiness

All researchers need to ensure that their findings are trustworthy (Brundrett and Rhodes, 2013). Interpretations arising from this study are relative to the time, place and position of the participant (Denscombe, 2003). Trustworthiness and authenticity refer to quality factors such as avoiding bias in sampling, piloting research instruments to ensure questions are understood, and consistency in interviewing. I avoided personal bias in choosing participants through the use of the postal questionnaire, snowballing and using networks to identify participants. The pilot interviews confirmed that participants understood the questions, enabling me to collect data which could answer my research questions, and my choice of semi-structured interviews ensured consistency in that all participants responded to the same core questions. A further feature of trustworthiness is respondent triangulation, that is, the extent to which there are similarities in the accounts and understandings provided by participants (Wisker, 2001; Denscombe, 2003),

although trustworthiness also requires acknowledging differences or inconsistencies. The findings in Chapter Four demonstrate many similarities but also some differences in participants' understandings and interpretations of their experiences, supporting claims for trustworthiness. The adoption of Erben's (1996) hermeneutic approach was helpful in this context. Trustworthiness requires the researcher to set aside personal prejudices and inclinations, to listen carefully to participants and to represent their interpretations honestly and with integrity. At the same time, the interpretative researcher must question and probe the participant to encourage disclosure and deter superficial rhetoric or obfuscation. This creates a dichotomy between validity, which requires consistency of questioning, and greater trustworthiness which results from the flexible use of probing questions to explore individual experiences (Brundrett and Rhodes, 2013).

3.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

3.4.1 Introduction

Ethical considerations pervade the whole research arena including the conceptualisation of research, the identification of research questions and the conduct of research. The British Educational Research Association Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2004 - 2011) informed and underpinned the conduct of this study.

3.4.2 Informed consent

'The notion of voluntary informed consent is unquestionably at the heart of research ethics in the natural sciences' (McNamee, 2001 p310). I informed

participants of the research aims and revealed my identity as both white

female researcher and senior leader in the FE sector at the outset. At the

start of each interview I re-confirmed the research aims, discussed ethical

issues and requested participants to sign a consent form (Appendix 10,

page 302) following Robson's (2002) guidelines. I believe that participants

may benefit from their involvement by reflecting on and understanding their

experiences and do not anticipate that any participant could suffer detriment

(Cohen et al, 2000). No-one declined to take part in the study and all

participants affirmed the value of the research for them and hence for me. I

did not consult with participants regarding the interpretation of their

narratives but I followed Erben's (1996) 'hermeneutical circle' (p160),

carrying issues forward from one interview to the next which supported my

understanding and interpretation of the narratives.

3.4.3 Data protection

Data protection rules have been fully observed. The information has been

kept and managed solely by me and is accessible only to me and to my

supervisor if required. I transcribed the tapes so confidentiality has been

assured. In the instance where a participant's personal assistant took notes

during the interview and transcribed these, at the behest of this participant, the

requirement to maintain confidentiality was made explicit and the assistant

kept no records.

3.4.4 Confidentiality

Interviews were conducted in settings which provided confidentiality (Cohen et al, 2000). Each participant has been given a pseudonym to preserve confidentiality and ensure anonymity in accordance with research ethics. Anglicised pseudonyms were used for all participants because more culturally appropriate pseudonyms for BME participants could jeopardise anonymity, given the relatively small number of BME women leaders in FE. I believe that this encouraged participants to speak freely but does not adversely affect the data or findings.

3.4.5 Insider-outsider issues

3.4.5.1 Introduction

One ethical challenge within the interpretative paradigm is the extent to which the researcher's identity is that of insider or outsider (Blair, 1998; Pring, 2001). I am an insider in relation to my experience of FE leadership and my gender but an outsider in relation to race/ethnicity vis-à-vis BME participants.

3.4.5.2 Insider status *qua* leadership

Platt (1981) expounds specific problems in interviewing elites who 'expect to be treated as such' (p83) and who may wish to comment on the 'intellectual legitimacy' (p80) of the research. Although participants could be described as elites because they were senior leaders, they were also my peers, therefore 'conscious role-playing is required' (Platt, 1981 p78). I was able to develop research-based relationships with participants, thereby avoiding the potential problems which Platt (1981) outlined. A further

ethical issue is the intimacy created through interviewing one's peers. Platt (1981) suggests that 'one should in effect pretend that the interview never happened' (p78) to avoid future ethical dilemmas and this shaped my professional relationships with participants.

3.4.5.3 Insider issues: gender

Many researchers (Bridges, 2001; Robson, 2002; Denscombe, 2003; Guneratnam, 2003) place epistemological importance on the relationship between researchers and the researched in terms of both gender and race/ethnicity. Finch (1984) argues the need for critical placing when women interview women, positing that gender placing is more critical than race/ethnicity. This suggests that a woman interviewing a woman may promote a richer discussion because 'women are much more aware of gender issues at a quite complex level, but men are nonplussed when these issues are raised' (Gray, 1993 p112).

3.4.5.4 Insider-outsider issues: race and ethnicity

Interracial research 'causes considerable emotional and methodological anxiety to researchers' (Guneratnam, 2003 p56). Finch's (1984) stance is contested by some black feminist researchers who advocate a 'black feminist standpoint epistemology… which stems from their desire to understand the position of Black women and their experiences of double subjectivity' (Mirza, 1998 p81), thus suggesting that white women cannot effectively undertake research with BME participants. However, Fitzgerald (2010) proposes 'a form of prosopography, that is collective biography, in

order to uncover similarities between individuals and their professional and personal backgrounds' (p97) which can 'create a space for the voices' (p94).

Guneratnam (2003) asserts the significance of race in both methodological and epistemological issues, positing that 'there are no clear "cause" and "effect" relationships between …racialized research participants and interviewers, and processes of producing knowledge about racialized difference' (p77). In this context Bridges (2001) insists that 'while we might acknowledge the limitations of the understanding which someone from outside a community…can develop, this does not entail that they cannot develop and present *an* understanding or that such understanding is worthless' (p374). Its value will depend on the extent to which the outsider has 'immersed themselves in the world of the other and portrayed it in its richness and complexity' (Bridges, 2001 p375). However, it is reasonable to assume that in relation to some issues, BME respondents might respond differently to BME researchers than to white researchers (Warmington, 2009). 'One general but consistent suggestion from the literature is that the answers that participants give to questions relating to opinions on particular racial issues tend to reflect their attitudes more closely when interviewers are of the same race as the research participant' (Guneratnam, 2003 p66). I acknowledge 'the political nature of knowledge production…in qualitative research on race and ethnicity' (Guneratnam, 2003 p64) but was anxious to avoid 'positioning difference as something that cannot be of

value in examining and learning from research encounters' (Guneratnam, 2003 p80).

3.5 STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN

The strengths and limitations of the research design, set out in Table 9, are rooted in paradigmatic differences. This study has been located within the interpretative paradigm. The ontological assumptions of interpretative approaches are based on a world of ideas and meanings which cannot exist independently of the subjects who create and interpret such meaning (Pring, 2000). The epistemological aims are to produce qualitative findings with an emancipatory cognitive interest (Habermas, 1971) within the critical knowledge domain (Gunter and Ribbins, 2002). Whilst the concept of generalisability of findings has its origins in positivist approaches, relatability of findings refers to the identification of themes and trends which emerge within phenomenological approaches (Denscombe, 2003).

Table 9: Strengths and limitations of the research

Issue	Strengths	Limitations
Researcher and participants were all women	The common gender of researcher and participants is a key strength in the research design (Finch, 1984) and underlies the epistemological stance (Usher, 1996a)	The findings may not be gender specific. There was no male control group
Sample size small	Enables in-depth analysis of the impact of experiences on each participant's career (Hall, 1996)	Findings cannot be generalised (Habermas, 1987; Denscombe, 2003)
Composition of sample was not	Sample was a non-probability purposive sample to meet the	Findings cannot be replicated

statistical	aims of the research (Robson, 2002)	(Denscombe, 2003)
The fieldwork was conducted over a particular period of time	The findings provide a snapshot of women's experiences as leaders at a particular time (Gunter, 2006)	Findings cannot be replicated (Denscombe, 2003)
Triangulation (Robson, 2002)	The research is based on narrated stories freely offered by participants within the phenomenological strand of subjectivism (Schutz, 1970; Pring, 2000; Denscombe, 2003)	The research design does not enable the stories to be verified (Song and Parker, 1995)
Validity (Cohen et al, 2000)	The research design is trustworthy and produced findings which demonstrate internal validity and relatability (Denscombe, 2003; Brundrett and Rhodes, 2013)	Findings are based on the researcher's understanding and interpretation of the narratives (Peshkin, 2000)
Semi-structured interviews as a research method	Enables flexibility and hermeneutic approach (Erben, 1996)	Responses are subjective and uncorroborated (Robson, 2002)
Outsider status of researcher with regard to BME participants	Race of interviewer effects do not negate the value of research (Guneratnam, 2003) and outsider research can give voice to under-represented groups (Bridges, 2001; Fitzgerald, 2010)	Accounts given to outsiders with regard to race/ethnicity issues may differ from accounts given to BME researchers (Guneratnam, 2003; Warmington, 2009)

3.6 PRESENTING THE FINDINGS

The next chapter presents the findings from this research. These findings

derive firstly from the postal questionnaire which revealed the

representation of white and BME women leaders in respondent colleges,

which helps to set the context within which the individual stories can be

understood. The overarching aim of this research was to deconstruct the

binary which separates understandings of white and BME women's

leadership in FE. Therefore findings from the narrated stories are

presented within an inclusive discourse which brings together the

experiences of white and BME women. However, where there are

differences arising from race/ethnicity these are acknowledged and

highlighted. Thus this research differs from Hall's (1996) and Davidson's

(1997) studies which focus separately on white or BME women.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents findings from this study, starting with findings from the postal questionnaire. This demonstrates the representation of white and BME women in senior management teams in West Midlands colleges at the start of the fieldwork. The chapter next presents findings from participants' narrated stories of their careers, structured around my adaptation of Gronn and Ribbins (1996) career framework. These findings will embrace the plurality of experiences of these white and BME participants within an inclusive discourse, but where there are differences which participants ascribe to be based on race/ethnicity, these will be foregrounded. Participants first reflect on family and school influences on their career aims in the formation phase. Then they give their accounts of their approaches to career and how they came to work in the FE sector in the accession phase. The next section focuses on the incumbency phase when participants describe their experiences as leaders and senior leaders in their colleges, identifying barriers to their career aspirations and sources of support which sustained them. This section includes a focus on the barrier of racism encountered by BME participants. The final section explores participants' future career aims in the divestiture phase when they move on from their present leadership positions.

4.1 FINDINGS FROM THE POSTAL QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire profiled senior management teams in West Midlands
colleges by gender and race/ethnicity to assist with the identification of
participants and to contextualise their experiences. Data were derived from
nine colleges.

4.1.1 Senior management teams

Colleges define and constitute their senior management teams (SMT).
Some consist solely of senior postholders whilst others include additional
senior managers within a larger leadership team. Figure 1 illustrates
variations in team size.

Figure 1: Size of senior management teams in West Midlands FE colleges
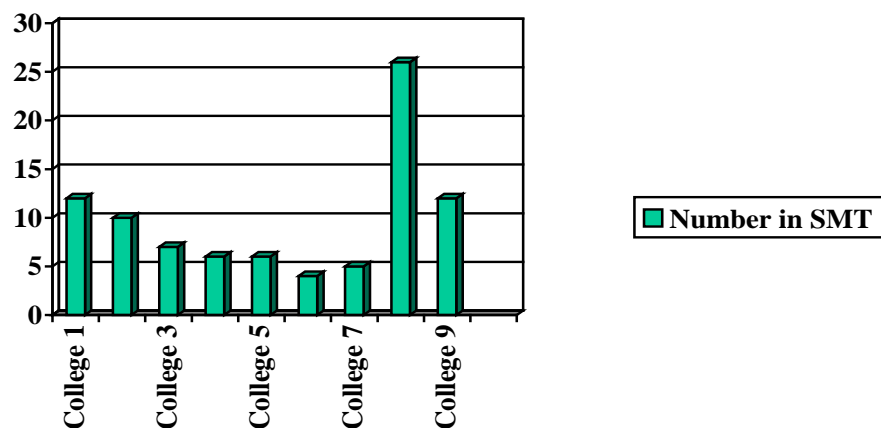
4.1.2 Gender

All respondent colleges had a mix of women and men senior managers.

Out of a total of 127 senior managers, 39 (31%) were women. The

proportion of women ranged from 20% to 70%. Figures 2 and 3 detail these

findings.

Figure 2: Number of female and male senior managers in West Midlands
FE colleges
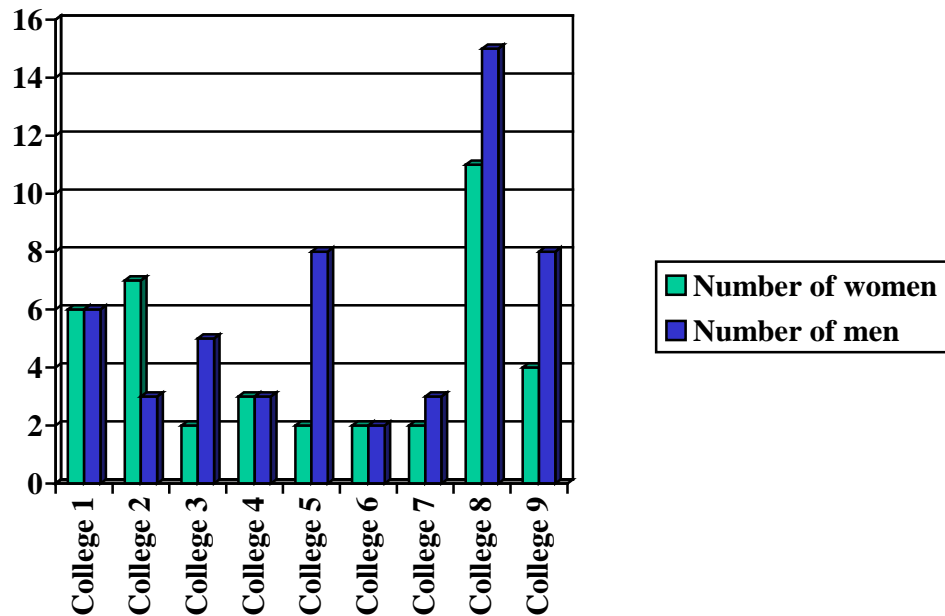
Figure 3: Women as a percentage of the senior management team in West
Midlands FE colleges
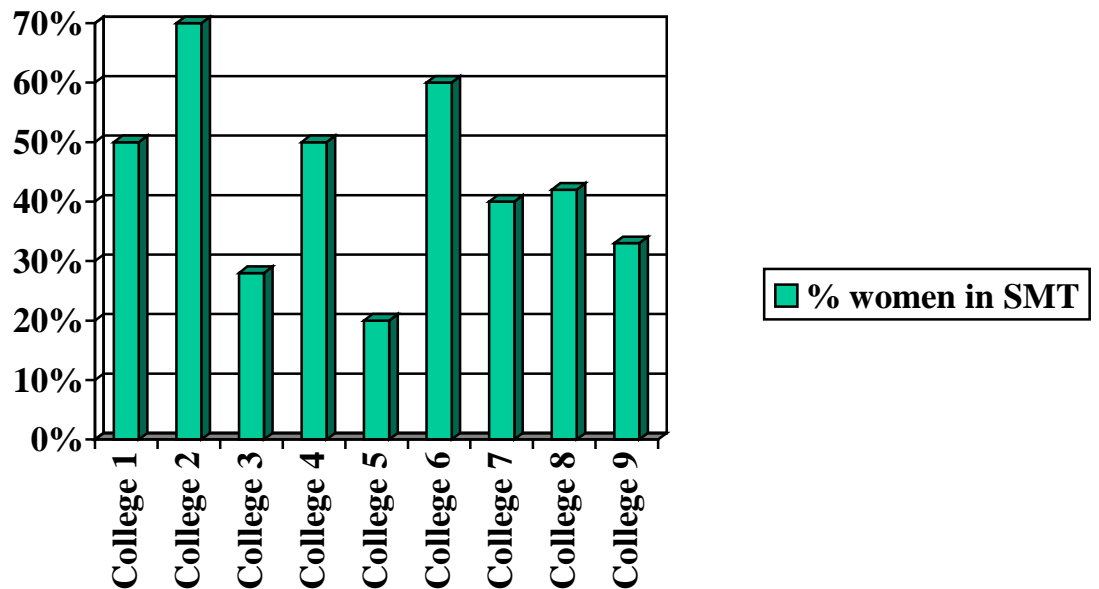
4.1.3 Race and ethnicity

Only three colleges had any BME women senior managers, and 35 (90%)

of the 39 women senior managers were white (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Number of women senior managers in West Midlands FE colleges
by race/ethnicity
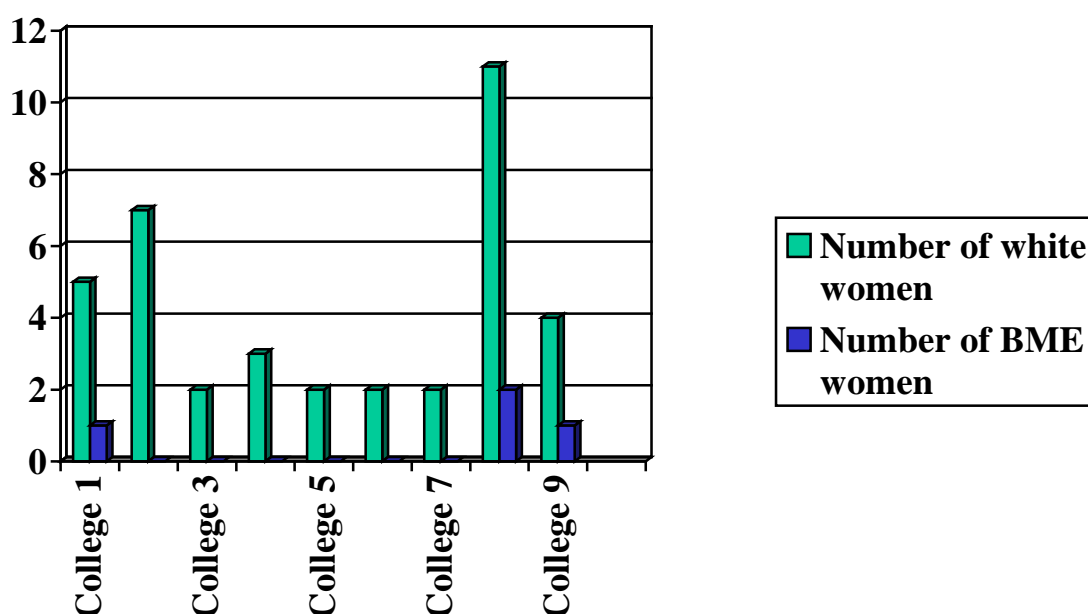
4.1.4 Positions held by women senior managers

Women senior managers held a range of posts, shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Posts held by women senior managers in West Midlands FE
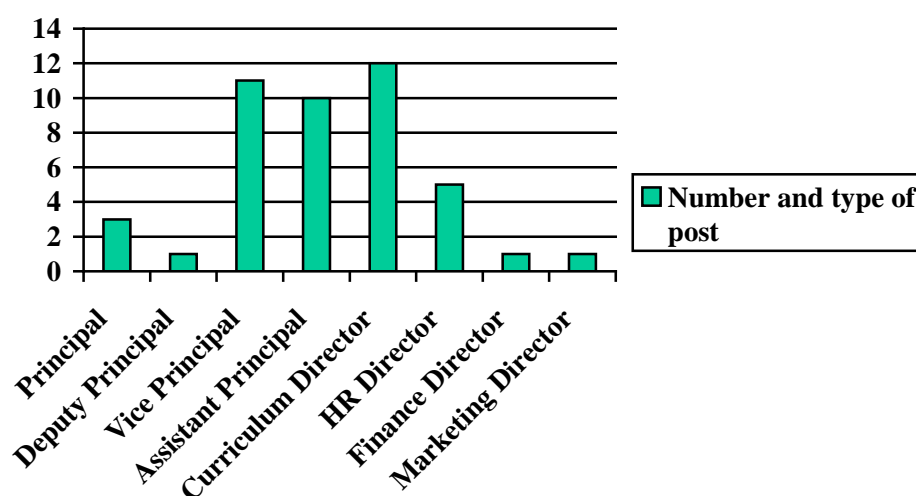
colleges

4.1.5 Comparing the findings from the questionnaire with the interview sample

The interview sample comprised sixteen participants, eleven (69%) white and five (31%) BME. The sample included a higher proportion of BME women than found in the questionnaire to ensure that BME women are given voice. Table 10 profiles participants by race/ethnicity and post held when interviewed, using pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality.

Table 10: Race/ethnicity and posts held by participants

Pseudonym	Race/ethnicity	Post held
Rachael	White	Principal
Kathryn	BME	Deputy Principal
Maureen	White	Deputy Principal
Helen	White	Vice Principal
Sally	White	Vice Principal
Sheila	White	Vice Principal
Christine	White	Director, then Vice Principal
Barbara	BME	Assistant Principal
Joanna	White	Assistant Principal
Alice	White	Director
Bryony	White	Director
Elizabeth	BME	Director
Georgina	BME	Director
Julie	White	Director
Lily	White	Director
Margaret	BME	Curriculum Leader

The chapter next presents findings from participants' narratives, structured around four stages of career, namely formation, accession, incumbency and divestiture (Gronn and Ribbins, 1996).

4.2 FINDINGS RELATING TO FORMATION PHASE OF CAREER

The formation phase explores influences arising from family background,

parental attitudes towards education, schooling, educational achievements

and initial career aspirations.

4.2.1 Family background
Parents held a wide range of occupations, some mothers worked outside the home whilst others did not, and participants' family positions varied. Table 11 summarises these findings.

Table 11: Participants' family positions and background

Pseudonym and race/ethnicity	Position in family	Occupation of Mother	Occupation of Father
Alice (white)	Second of 5 children: has 3 sisters and a brother	Part time evening shifts in a factory	Painter and decorator, then postman
Barbara (BME)	Second of 4 children: has 1 older brother and 2 younger sisters	At home, later worked in a car manufacturing plant	Fork lift driver
Bryony (white)	Elder of 2 sisters	No work outside the home	Army Officer
Christine (white)	Eldest of 3 children: has 2 younger brothers	Full time primary school teacher	FE lecturer, then university lecturer
Elizabeth (BME)	Eldest of 3 children: has 1 brother and 1 sister	Nurse	No father present in the family
Georgina (BME)	Second of 4 children: has 1 older brother and a younger brother and sister	No work outside the home	Carpenter, then moved to be a Supervisor
Helen (white)	Younger of 2 sisters	Helped part time in family business	Army Officer
Julie (white)	Only child	Secretary, then no work outside the home	Engineer
Joanna (white)	Eldest of 6, with	Raised by step	Ran own business

	4 step siblings	mother who had no work outside the home	
Kathryn (BME)	Second of 4 children, with 3 brothers	No work outside the home	Businessman
Lily (white)	Middle child with two brothers	No work outside the home	Public sector manager
Margaret (BME)	Has 5 older sisters and one younger sister	Worked in a launderette	Taxi driver
Maureen (white)	Younger of two girls	Nurse	Excavator driver
Rachael (white)	Only child	No paid work until Rachael was 13, then Invoice Clerk	Office Manager
Sally (white)	Middle child with one older brother and a younger step-sister	Part time factory worker and cleaner	Maintenance engineer - died when Sally was aged 5. Step-father a Fire /Security Guard joined family when Sally was 11
Sheila (white)	Brought up as only child away from 3 step-sisters	Head teacher	Head teacher – left family when Sheila was born

4.2.2 Parental attitudes towards education

Parental attitudes towards their daughters' education varied.

Attitudes of fathers

Fathers' attitudes towards education varied across both white and BME families. Maureen, a white participant, and Georgina, a BME participant, were encouraged by their fathers.

> He was proud that I got to university, because I was the first one from the family to go (Maureen).

> Education was everything to my father – the be all and end all (Georgina).

Others including Rachael experienced pressure.

My father had a phrase 'making the grade' and there was pressure to get somewhere in what he saw as middle class (Rachael).

Some white and BME fathers were not supportive of their daughters' education.

My father held very strongly that it wasn't worth educating girls (Helen).

I heard my father saying 'If she was a boy it would be different but I'm not prepared to pay for her to go to boarding school' (Bryony).

There was this push for male education higher than female…My father sought advice from my uncle… who was saying, 'Why do you want your daughter to get an education?' (Barbara).

Attitudes of mothers

All participants except Maureen reported encouragement from their mothers. White participants' mothers often linked this support to their own life experiences. Sheila's mother, whose husband left on Sheila's birth, emphasised that education affords independence.

There was a heavy implied push to do well because the idea was that you should never depend on anybody else…especially a bloke (Sheila).

Alice and Sally, whose mothers had manual jobs, were encouraged to access broader life chances.

We were really pushed…to get us out of her own situation, her own frustration at what she did (Alice).

As far as my mother was concerned, being educated was a ticket to freedom (Sally).

Only Maureen's mother was lukewarm towards her ambitions.

People would say, 'What are you going to be when you grow up?' My mum said, 'Maureen's going to be a nun'… My mother was not particularly enthusiastic about me going to university (Maureen).

All the mothers of BME participants actively supported their daughters'
education.

> She saw education as important and religiously would ensure we did
> what was expected of us at school (Elizabeth).

Georgina and Margaret reported encouragement from both parents
because of their belief that 'educational achievement ruled your whole life'
(Margaret). However Kathryn's experience reflected a dichotomy between
academic and cultural values within her family.

> I come from a well educated family…and I started studying …
> However I was married…As tradition…my education actually
> stopped at that point (Kathryn).

4.2.3 Schooling and educational achievements

Half the participants attended grammar schools, but this cohort included
only one BME woman. Four participants attended secondary modern
schools, two attended comprehensive schools, one gained a scholarship
and attended a boarding school, whilst one participant was educated
overseas. There were significant differences in the school achievements
between white and BME participants. Nine white but only one BME
participant left school with A levels. Remaining participants had either GCE
O level or CSE qualifications, apart from one BME participant who left
school with no formal qualifications.

4.2.4 Initial career aspirations

There were marked differences between participants' early career
ambitions, linked to school achievement. The self-belief of participants with
A levels was reinforced by their teachers' encouragement to progress to

higher education. Margaret, the only BME participant in this cohort, found

this surprising.

> My sociology tutor suggested that I go to university. I asked him if
> black people went to university. I didn't know anyone who went to
> university (Margaret).

Seven white and one BME participant progressed directly from school to university, with a

ninth (white) participant first completing secretarial training at her father's behest. Whilst none

could recollect career plans, they recalled high ambition and self-belief.

> At the back of my mind I was going to be chairwoman of ICI or
> something! (Bryony)

> I always intended to have a career, not just a job (Alice).

Four white graduates then completed teacher training. Sally's school

advised a teaching career whilst Rachael chose 'quite by accident' because

teaching offered better pay than alternative work in advertising. Only Alice

and Maureen chose FE teaching as an initial career, in Alice's case through

serendipity.

> I got into a discussion with some people who were going into FE
> teaching…It sounded the right thing for me (Alice).

Maureen's choice was more strategic.

> My philosophy led me to want to teach in a post compulsory
> educational setting…I could be close to my subject by teaching it
> (Maureen).

Julie and Bryony qualified in accountancy and Sheila began work in

business. Margaret, the sole BME graduate, joined a housing project whilst

Helen became a full time wife and mother.

The three white non-graduate participants had little ambition. Christine left

school with A levels, married, had children and did not work outside the

home. Lily and Joanna had no thoughts of career.

I don't think I remember having ambition at all, no (Lily).

I did a variety of jobs, working in my Auntie's pub and in the summer I worked on holiday camps… In the winter I'd come home and do various temping jobs – bar work (Joanna).

The early careers of most BME participants were constrained by lack of GCE O level or GCSE qualifications on leaving school.

> I was studying for O level Biology, for which I had a very high grade in my mock, but I found out later when I went to sit the exam that my name wasn't even on the list… I was so marginalised that I couldn't even take the exam (Barbara).

Unlike their white counterparts without A levels, Barbara and Georgina displayed self-belief and ambition, completing GCE O levels alongside secretarial courses in FE colleges. Barbara's post in industry involved training so she undertook teacher training, again studying in FE. Georgina's self-belief fuelled ambition.

I went to do a top notch secretarial qualification… I wanted to be a personal assistant… Not an ordinary secretary, a private secretary! (Georgina)

However, the Careers Service found her an administrative job and did not encourage that ambition. Elizabeth left school with no qualifications, no ambition and no self-belief.

> I was written off… It took two years to sort it out and by then I was disengaged (Elizabeth).

A mentor within her community nurtured her self-belief.

> Once I'd realised the value of education in terms of what you could and couldn't do, I embarked on a series of employment alongside study (Elizabeth).

Kathryn, whose education halted when she married, raised her family before coming to the UK where she progressed from secretarial training at her local college.

> I completed my 730 and moved on to Cert Ed… Then I did my BEd Business Studies (Kathryn).

4.2.5 Summarising findings relating to the formation phase of career

There were no discernible patterns in participants' family backgrounds and
only one parent had worked in FE. Almost all mothers supported their
daughters' education whilst fathers' attitudes were more diverse. More
white participants gained A levels at school than their BME counterparts.
Whereas white participants who left school without A levels lacked ambition,
BME participants recalled higher ambitions underpinned by self-belief,
attending FE colleges to gain further qualifications. Only two participants
initially chose to work in FE. These findings are summarised in Table 12.

Table 12: Participants' qualifications and initial career choices at the formation
phase

Pseudonym	Race/ethnicity	Qualifications in formation phase	Initial employment/ career choice
Alice	White	A levels, degree and FE teacher training	FE lecturer
Barbara	BME	CSEs and secretarial training	Clerk
Bryony	White	A levels, degree and accountancy training	Accountant
Christine	White	A levels and secretarial training	Wife and mother with no paid work
Elizabeth	BME	No formal qualifications	BME project worker
Georgina	BME	CSEs and secretarial training	BME project administrator
Helen	White	A levels, secretarial training and degree	Wife and mother with no paid work
Joanna	White	Failed A levels but had passed GCSE	Casual and temporary bar work
Julie	White	A levels, degree and accountancy training	Accountant
Kathryn	BME	Overseas qualification equivalent to O levels	Wife and mother with no paid work
Lily	White	CSE	Bank clerk
Margaret	BME	A levels and degree	Housing project worker

Maureen	White	A levels, degree and FE teacher training	FE lecturer
Rachael	White	A levels, degree and school teacher training	School teacher
Sally	White	A levels, degree and school teacher training	School teacher
Sheila	White	A levels and degree	Finance company

The chapter next moves to explore participants' accession phase of career.

4.3 ACCESSION PHASE

4.3.1 Introduction

The accession phase relates to participants' entry to FE and the start of their progression towards leadership.

4.3.2 The route to FE

The routes into FE and towards leadership differed for white and BME participants.

4.3.2.1 White participants' routes towards FE leadership

Older white participants married soon after graduation. For many, the birth of children provided the impetus for entry to FE because FE offered opportunities to combine work with family commitments.

> I got an evening class teaching… I started to do a bit of daytime work as the children went to nursery school... I went full time when the youngest went to school (Helen).

> I got a job on a local newspaper…It was quite hard to have a family and do that sort of high target driven role… An opportunity came up at the local FE college…I went there because I was feeling the pressure of working at a newspaper with two young children, and the

appeal of 30 hours per week and 14 weeks holiday – great! (Christine)

None of these white participants conceptualised a career plan towards

leadership but their self-belief fuelled ambition.

> I suppose this is going to sound incredibly arrogant but I looked at people who were higher than me in the organisation and I thought, I could do that job better than you (Helen).

Rachael, who joined FE when her family relocated, was similarly driven.

> I was more effective than the others (Rachael).

Once in FE, a high proportion of white participants progressed through

informal selection practices.

> The vice principal asked me to look into it. I didn't intend to do the work myself but because there was no-one else to do it, I did (Rachael).

> The principal sort of hand picked me… I learned a huge amount from that job (Maureen).

Christine voiced some discomfiture.

> There are lots of times I've thought, I just wished there had been an advert in the paper that I could have applied for, and got it in my own right… I've suffered a lot from being seen as (the principal's) pet (Christine).

Bryony, Sheila and Julie, younger white participants, began careers in

industry. Bryony disliked accountancy and, encouraged by a friend,

completed teacher training and joined FE, also benefiting from informal

selection practices.

> I was extremely energetic and positive and very enthusiastic and prepared to put in an enormous amount of hours to make the faculty a success…so I was asked to take over a struggling section and I turned it round in a year…It gave me the opportunity (Bryony).

Sheila worked for a finance company and then in sales, but her decision to

attend college brought unexpected outcomes.

> The lecturer was probably the most useless waste of space I'd ever met! … I thought – I could do better than that, I could bring this alive (Sheila).

Driven by self-belief, Sheila joined FE and encouraged by her colleague,

obtained promotion through formal procedures.

> I never had a career plan…but I was talking to a woman colleague and she said, 'I've found a job for you'… So I applied, and I got it! (Sheila)

Julie recalled her somewhat random approach to her career.

> I got a place at university to read ancient history… The day before I was due to start I decided it was a foolish decision. It wasn't going to lead me to employment… I decided I would go and study social science... At that point I had no idea what I wanted to do... All through when I was a student I'd worked…part time... They offered me a job on their management training programme, which I would have done… Fortunately I got an interview with the NHS for their graduate trainee scheme, and they offered me a job to be a trainee accountant, which is something I had never considered doing at all. So I thought, yes, it's an opportunity to study for a post-graduate qualification, I'll give it a go (Julie).

Julie left the NHS 'because it was not a nice place to be' but her move into

FE was also unplanned.

> I just by chance saw the job advertised (Julie).

Lily and Joanna, the remaining two white participants, left school without A

levels and both studied in FE before working in the sector. Lily graduated

after the birth of her children and was offered work, again without formal

selection processes.

> A friend of mine who was a manager in the local FE college was short of a teacher... It was a 'would you help me out for a few weeks' (Lily).

Joanna returned to study with fluid plans.

> I'd no career in mind… It was just… I could get a really well paid job at a higher level… A friend suggested I would make a very good teacher…They did have a teacher training course…I didn't really know – primary, secondary – it was a Cert Ed to teach in FE but I didn't realise this…That is how I got into FE – by accident! (Joanna)

Joanna was formally interviewed for a lecturer post and later a leadership post. These findings highlight white participants' routes into FE.

4.3.2.2 BME participants' routes towards FE leadership

Margaret, the only BME participant who graduated on leaving school, worked for a housing project until the birth of her first child when she trained as a secondary school teacher but moved to teach in FE. Having then worked abroad, she completed a masters degree and rejoined FE. Other BME participants all studied in FE before working in the sector. Kathryn benefited from informal selection procedures when the principal offered her part time lecturing work and later a middle management post. Georgina encountered racism from a white male senior manager in a local authority when she sought promotion from her project administrator role. This prompted her to undertake further part time study and she graduated at first degree and master's levels and gained an advanced professional qualification. Her project work led to her joining a college where she progressed through formal selection processes. Over time, Elizabeth also gained advanced professional qualifications and significant management experience. Both Elizabeth and Barbara joined FE in leadership positions through formal selection processes. Table 13 summarises these findings.

Table 13: Summarising participants' routes into FE

Pseudonym	Race/	First employment/	Reason for entering FE

	ethnicity	career choice	
Alice	White	FE lecturer	FE teaching recommended by friends
Barbara	BME	Clerk: then various private sector roles	Career progression from training role in private sector
Bryony	White	Accountant	Disliked initial career choice. Teaching recommended by a friend
Christine	White	Wife and mother with no paid work: then journalist	More compatible with family responsibilities than journalism
Elizabeth	BME	Community project worker	Career progression from public/ private sector posts
Georgina	BME	Project administrator	Left previous post because of racism
Helen	White	Wife and mother with no paid work: then part time FE lecturer	Compatible with family responsibilities
Joanna	White	Casual temporary bar work: then administrative work	FE teaching recommended by a friend
Julie	White	Accountant	Career progression from other public sector
Kathryn	BME	Wife and mother with no paid work	Studied in FE and was offered part time teaching by the principal
Lily	White	Bank clerk	Offered part time teaching by a friend
Margaret	BME	Housing project	Trained as a school teacher but preferred to teach adults
Maureen	White	FE lecturer	Wanted to teach in non-compulsory sector
Rachael	White	School teacher	Family moved. Could not find work in a school
Sally	White	School teacher	FE compatible with family responsibilities
Sheila	White	Finance company	Career change after attending FE as a student

4.3.3 Career planning in the accession phase

Two BME participants developed formal career plans.

> Each year…I would have three areas I'd look at, and it was
> development for me the person, development of my job and the third
> bullet would be around my family… So this process of reviewing my
> career planning for over twenty years now, is that I would broadly
> talk about the range of salary I'd expect to be earning at different

times, the range of skills sets that I might have and need to develop, the sorts of programmes I might need to go on. They are all recorded (Elizabeth).

Kathryn also formalised career planning as she progressed in FE, analysing her development needs and planning moves. Christine, a white participant, initially had a career plan.

I did have one when I worked at North College…I'd want to aspire to be vice principal, possibly to be a principal… I don't think I have now. That's more because my personal circumstances have changed (Christine).

Christine subsequently reactivated her career plan as revealed in the divestiture section later in this chapter. The remaining participants had no career plans but were generally ambitious and demonstrated self-belief.

No plan, never, not at all (Sally).

I didn't consciously sit down and develop a career plan, but when there was an opening I went for it (Helen).

I always intended to have a career but I had no career plan (Alice).

I don't have a career plan, a three year or five year plan or anything like that… I suppose the thing I have is my confidence…I have a presence… As long as I know where I want to go I can use it (Georgina).

It has been unplanned and not deliberate, I've just taken one step at a time (Lily).

All participants enacted leadership in the context of marketisation and managerialism (Ainley and Bailey, 1997; Randle and Brady, 1997).

4.3.4 Responses to marketisation in the accession phase

Older participants accommodated to marketisation after incorporation but marketisation was

embedded when younger participants became FE leaders (Ainley and Bailey, 1997). The

literature review in Chapter Two delineated a typology of responses to marketisation amongst

middle managers (Gleeson and Shain, 1999; Gunter et al, 2003). Half the participants

demonstrated 'willing compliance' (Gleeson and Shain, 1999 p474). Joanna articulated the

language of the market.

We are very very mission driven…We are a public sector service, paid for by taxpayers. We
have to fulfil that in a business like way… because it gives more value to the taxpayer
(Joanna).

Christine welcomed marketisation.

> It was very innovative and fun… The new head was inspirational because he was
> an accountant. The first thing he did when a funding document came out was to
> work out how much everything was going to earn (Christine).

Managerialism aligned to Kathryn's personal philosophy.

> I would say I'm very task focused. Performance and accountability drive, and
> seeing that difference. So perhaps this has helped me, that focus in FE, to find my
> way and to get on (Kathryn).

Although welcoming marketisation in the accession phase, Bryony's experiences led her to

critique managerialism in the divestiture phase, as revealed later in this chapter.

There was evidence of 'pragmatic compliance' (Gunter et al, 2003 p308) within the narratives

of remaining participants who accepted managerialism as the context for enacting leadership.

Illustratively, Sheila described how she negotiated the managerialist/professionalist binary.

> When we have to make a decision they know it often has to be financially driven…
> I've shaved a couple of budgets but they know I'll fight for it…I find every possible
> way to put the students through (Sheila).

Rachael described 'the juggling act' in imposing market imperatives whilst maintaining staff

support. Lily was pragmatic in prioritising managerialism despite acknowledging the risks.

Paper work can lead to a lack of vibrancy in an organisation… It could be harmful just to keep
appointing bureaucrats… But with the accountability and attention to measurements, targets,
transparency and all of these things – financial constraints – I think more and more, that is the
person you look for (Lily).

4.3.5 Summarising findings in the accession phase

Only two participants initially planned to work in FE, but many found working in FE compatible

with family commitments. Others chose FE, sometimes quite randomly, because they were

dissatisfied with their initial career choices. Participants who did not graduate on leaving

school all studied in FE before working in the sector. The majority did not plan their careers

although there was evidence of self-belief, generic ambition and opportunism. Exceptionally,

two BME participants engaged in detailed career planning. Many white participants

progressed through informal selection processes whereas only one BME participant so

benefited. Participants accepted marketisation either willingly or pragmatically as the context

for career progression. The chapter next presents findings relating to participants'

experiences as leaders, that is, the incumbency phase of career (Gronn and Ribbins, 1996).

4.4 EXPERIENCES AS LEADERS IN THE INCUMBENCY PHASE

4.4.1 Introduction

The incumbency phase of career relates to progression to leadership and

the route to senior management.

4.4.2 Sources of support

There was consistency in identifying sources of support which helped

participants to develop and enact leadership.

4.4.2.1 Female mentors and role models

Most of the older white participants found some supportive female

colleagues despite women's low representation in college leadership, as

Maureen, confronting sexism, explained.

> A couple of the middle management women, female colleagues, they
> were slightly supportive…They explained what kind of person he is
> and his characteristics (Maureen).

Younger white participants, who became leaders when greater numbers of

women had progressed within FE, all worked alongside supportive women.

I had a woman manager…I learned a lot from her…She was wonderful in opening a few doors (Sheila).

Christine, Georgina and Lily described the benefits of working with female principals.

The principal was very behind women and keen on women progressing and doing well (Christine).

She made it seem possible for a woman to become a principal (Lily).

She encouraged me to develop as a manager in FE (Georgina).

Bryony learned from other women's experiences.

There was a great deal of friction between one woman and my boss... The messages I was getting were … you shouldn't be too pushy at work because people will hate you… I didn't want to emulate her. But another lady who was heading towards the SMT…was a very very attractive lady and all these nasty rumours went round about why she was in that position… The message that went out to me was – I mustn't use my femininity to get on (Bryony).

Bryony found a role model.

I had a female manager… She was extremely well organised... I did start to model myself on her (Bryony).

Lily acknowledged her own tendency to appoint female managers.

You tend to select people who are more like you are (Lily).

BME participants Elizabeth, Georgina and Margaret also benefited from supportive white female colleagues.

The white woman… senior manager in my last job, she was so dynamic and charismatic…I sat there and watched her pull the right strings together…She certainly did that for me (Elizabeth).

A new white woman came in… She suggested that I was talented…She was very influential to me, she pushed for me to do more (Georgina).

A head of department was a fantastic individual who managed to give me some time … a white woman, she was excellent (Margaret)

But one BME participant differed.

The white women managers were not role models for me (Kathryn).

4.4.2.2 Male mentors

Several white participants, isolated by their gender, recalled supportive

male colleagues who nurtured self-belief.

> The deputy head of department…gave me advice, he sort of mentored me and gave me support (Alice).

> I had a superb senior manager. It was only on the basis of listening to him that I had any belief that I could really do this, because everybody else was male, I was a lone woman (Helen).

> I was supported by a lad… who was on the SMT…and also clerk to the governors, so I got the inside knowledge of the governors, and learned to play the governor game, which I hadn't been exposed to before… Also the principal said he was willing to look at all sorts of different ways of working…He encouraged me, and he'd support me (Sheila).

Only one BME participant described similar support. A white male principal

offered Kathryn part time teaching and subsequently encouraged her to

take a course leadership role.

4.4.2.3 Networking

Attitudes towards networking differed. Some participants welcomed

opportunities to link to women's networks.

> Wider networking is important… I did a very useful course on women and leadership and met other women leaders (Rachael).

However, Joanna opposed women-only networks.

> I don't like the distinction between men and women's networks… I think you are putting yourself into a category of kind of victims, so I don't think we should network with other victims so that we can help ourselves (Joanna).

Despite this, Joanna found women more supportive than men in her

professional network.

> I would regularly pick up the phone to Sue, another woman, and say, 'What's all this about?'… I just felt able to phone, I don't know if it is because she is another woman or what. I don't feel able to phone a man because they are all very – put on a brave face and pretend that you are perfect in every way, don't share any flaws… I find the women are far more open (Joanna).

There was general support amongst BME participants for BME networks.

> I created a network of people outside the organisation to support me… Also I assisted a lot of individuals and was a founder of a black network in the college where I worked (Barbara).

> I have women's networks and I'm also a mentor for black women (Elizabeth).

Kathryn sounded one note of caution.

> I think BME networks are definitely a vehicle, a tool, in order to promote equality of opportunity and recognition of finding those talents and potential in order to encourage and develop people further… But at times I have been uncomfortable in those meetings. The reason for that is, as soon as I start to get a feeling that this could be a vehicle for an excuse, or to blame other people for their own shortcomings, it makes me feel very very uncomfortable (Kathryn).

4.4.2.4 Support from family and friends

Married participants saluted their husbands' support.

> My husband is the most golden man in the world. He is so supportive (Julie).

> The biggest push and drive has been my husband (Elizabeth).

Several BME participants acknowledged support from wider family

members

including Margaret whose family provided childcare, whilst others identified

friends or colleagues outside FE.

> It was a man, a West Indian man, and it was the right nudge that I needed…There's been that continuous influence (Elizabeth).

4.4.2.5 Self-belief

White and BME participants reported self-belief as a key motivator which

fuelled ambition in the accession and incumbency phases.

> I suppose I did it on my own terms – there weren't any other women
> so you had to do it on your own (Helen).

> I said to the principal I was keen to progress… I think I could lead a
> college into successful times (Julie).

> I believe in myself…There were no other BME managers. I'm very
> ambitious…I did it on my own… Self-motivation and family (Kathryn).

> Just my self-drive… I was confident in my ability…The key that I
> found was that I was a self-starter and a survivor… It's really the
> inner drivers (Barbara).

> Absolutely self-belief. I knew that I could do it… I'm very driven
> (Elizabeth).

For a minority, self-belief was less secure.

> I sometimes find I don't have the self-belief that it is me doing the job
> that I do, with all these staff. It feels unreal sometimes (Lily).

> I never thought I could be a principal until people started telling me
> that (Maureen).

These sources of support helped participants to respond to challenges and

barriers they encountered.

4.4.3 Challenges and barriers

There was a high degree of consistency amongst participants when

describing the challenges and barriers encountered as leaders.

4.4.3.1 Sexism and masculinist culture

Almost all participants faced sexism within a prevalent masculinist

leadership orthodoxy and culture.

> There was a lot of antipathy towards women. I was told at one interview that I would get the job if I changed sex! (Rachael)

> We had women …but it wasn't at the top (Barbara)

Maureen and Sally recalled interviews when they were unsuccessful, during which male panellists asked inappropriate questions relating to their status as wives and mothers rather than their employment skills and experience. Rachael faced sexist hostility from her immediate superior and Bryony from her staff.

> He basically ignored me, he was a misogynist (Rachael).

> I think men beneath you can be quite problematic…They just couldn't stand to have a woman manager (Bryony).

Sally encountered sexism and masculinist culture on meeting new male colleagues.

> There were a couple of male members of staff and one said ' Hello, are you new?' … I said, 'I'm in the community education division', and he said 'I didn't know either of the secretaries had left'. So I said 'No, I've come as head of division', and he went 'Bloody hell!' – just like that! … So obviously there were very few women managers here (Sally).

Ongoing sexism eroded Sally's self-belief.

The principal, he used to undermine my confidence…I know it was based on gender…It was the talk of the college because everybody said it wasn't fair (Sally).
One incident highlighted the sexism and masculinist culture which Julie faced.

We were tendering for some electrical engineers, and myself and the estates manager and a property advisor were interviewing these companies. I went to fetch one company and introduced myself and asked: 'Do you want to come through?' And the guy actually shut the door on me! Because he assumed that I was just the secretary who was wheeling them in (Julie).

Participants' responses to sexism varied.

> I thought, oh well, to hell with it! If that's the way it is, I'll go on doing my job and I'll be fine (Sally).

> I'd like to feel I ignored it and got on with it! (Helen)

> You had to work very hard to prove yourself (Alice).

I do think, as a woman, I have to work harder (Joanna).

The majority of younger white participants encountered sexism even though more women held leadership positions in FE.

I still think there is gender prejudice…being a woman, progressing to the top. I think we've got a long way to go before we get true equality (Julie).

I think there is an automatic assumption with men that they are tough… but I think with women there isn't that automatic assumption and I think women have to work harder to show that they are tough. I don't have to work harder than men to show that I'm nice and treat people fairly and treat people well, but I do have to work harder to show that I can be tough (Joanna).

Alice and Bryony were alienated by sexism and masculinist cultures within their senior management teams.

There were some bully boy tactics, Alan in particular…At his worst…he was particularly nasty, there was a spell when he was unbearable. He undermined me, he saw me as a competitor (Alice).

For the first time ever, being a woman in that atmosphere was a problem… It made me reflect on my experience at my previous college where women on the senior management team there did comment about the boys' club, and interestingly as a middle manager I never experienced that… It was only in that next job that I thought – gosh, there is a bit of a boys' club going on here, and I found it alien to the way that I operate (Bryony).

Lily responded by engaging with the masculinist culture.

I used a bit of a ploy about being one of the lads. Going out for a pint with them, …being one of the five-a-side football team (Lily).

Only two participants assessed their gender as a positive attribute.

Being a woman has helped immensely. I think some of the colleges that I joined…were so used to grey suited men, that a female, youngish female… I think it's made all the difference. I think the fact that there aren't many women on senior management teams is very useful, as you are climbing up (Sheila).

I think I used my female charms…to get what I wanted (Lily).

In addition to sexism, participants reported isolation.

4.4.3.2 Isolation

White and BME participants felt isolated. Rachael recalled isolation within

the overwhelmingly male national college leaders' network. Helen

described her isolation in the management team.

> Everybody pointed me out as 'the woman'… It was a very masculine environment and one of the men said to me, 'You are OK, we look on you as being one of the boys', and I said 'Is that meant to be a compliment or what?' 'Oh yes', he said, but I'm not so sure! (Helen)

Maureen felt isolated when, as the only woman senior manager, the male

principal offered no support in dealing with a sexist colleague who had

opposed her appointment.

> One of my colleagues was making mischief... He was my biggest challenge… He made my life difficult from that day to this (Maureen).

Joanna faced isolation on moving to a different college.

> When I first arrived here I was given a desk… and left, if I'm honest with you…The first few days I regretted moving here…I spent lunch times on my own, I was on my own in the evening, I was uncomfortable (Joanna).

BME participants, further isolated by race/ethnicity or culture, were

sometimes excluded from communications and decision making.

> There has been isolation…There has been that you are left out of communications…I am the only minority person in the senior management team (Barbara).

> I don't drink alcohol whatsoever, I'm not part of the pub politics. I don't smoke, the smoking people outside. These are the places where major decisions are being made…I don't fit into this as it currently stands (Margaret).

> There was no voice, no network (Georgina).

Margaret explained how a group of principals, discussing the under-

representation of BME leaders, failed to comprehend the impact of isolation.

> I said, 'What do you do to support BME staff moving up?'…They looked at me as if I was speaking another language! And I said, 'Well, if your BME staff look at the job and feel unconnected, how are they going to feel comfortable in making that move from where they are to where they want to be?'… Most of the principals looked

totally perplexed when I said that, because as far as they are concerned, the fault lies with BME staff. They couldn't want those jobs and didn't apply for the jobs, and if they don't apply, how can they expect to move up? (Margaret)

Some white and BME participants' isolation was exacerbated by

unsupportive white female colleagues.

There was a significant other, a woman, who made me feel not at ease. She was officious. She was quite driven. She was quite cold. So I was not reassured by her, I was – well what have you let yourself in for here? (Maureen)

She held me down. She didn't like other women doing well. She wanted women there to support her but she felt they shouldn't be competitive (Alice).

I wasn't given the opportunity to develop in the role….It's like giving a sweet to a child but making them keep the wrapper on, so they aren't allowed to taste it, to taste the sweetness of it…She didn't want other people to appear as good as she was (Georgina).

Whilst BME participants' race/ethnicity contributed to their isolation they

encountered the additional barrier of racism.

4.4.3.3 Racism

All but one of the BME participants reported experiences of racism within FE.

We work harder in terms of always having to prove ourselves… Always being set up to fail, people coming out with your ideas when you've already said it, being overlooked in a meeting. Do you want me to go on? It happens. So you have to have the skills to deal with it (Elizabeth).

The biggest challenge has been other people's perception and judgement of me as a black woman, most definitely, and them needing to slot me somewhere as opposed to allowing me to expand and grow into other roles (Margaret).

It's one particular individual, he leaves me out of things …You get that spectrum who are covert and quite malicious towards ethnic minorities and will sabotage your projects despite the value they may have to the organisation (Barbara).

Georgina's experience was the most extreme, occurring when she first

entered the college.

There were very few black staff, not enough to be significant…There was no voice, it was very white. So we went and bought pictures –

Gandhi, Marcus Garvey, and maps of India and the Caribbean…Then the racism showed itself. They were soon broken - the glass was smashed in the first week…There were staff comments about 'wogs' on the wall (Georgina).

Margaret, who applied unsuccessfully to a college with an all white senior

management team, found herself confronting racist recruitment practices.

I wasn't short-listed… I was told, yes you met all the criteria, and you wrote a really strong supporting statement…What she was saying was that there were other reasons why you weren't short-listed… I knew that was what it was about….Legally I should have been short-listed…My union said I had a strong case (Margaret).

There was pressure to assimilate into the dominant white culture because

some white colleagues seemed uncomfortable with difference.

I'm West Indian by background – we have a language and a way of constructing a sentence which is so different and sometimes alien to people I work with. But they would just have no idea! I have to switch from understanding my background to what's acceptable here (Elizabeth).
My team perceive me culturally as I don't know what! I try to make them aware I am a black woman… I live a black experience, a black life, I eat black food, I don't eat English Sunday roast! One of my team said something to do with music and Sunday roast with Yorkshire pudding, and I said I don't do anything like that and they don't believe me! They think I have assimilated (Georgina).

Barbara and Elizabeth explained their strategies for responding to racism.

I always look at it from the implications to the organisation. I don't make it personal, and I actually highlight strategies for alleviating the situation. Why do I do that? I think sometimes if you go like a bull in a china shop you don't generally get where you want to (Barbara).

I had to fight like mad with the senior management team who were white middle class male – all of an age… I want to challenge them – all the time… Sometimes you can feel like a lone soldier trying - and you don't want to look as if you've got a chip on your shoulder do you? I've spent a lot of time developing skills where hopefully you can get the others to look at what they're saying to me…It's painful and it's tiring, it's wearing (Elizabeth).

My father instilled in me that…I would have to work twice as hard to be able to prove myself (Georgina)

In considering the intersectionality of race and gender as barriers to career

progression, Margaret conflated these two aspects of her identity when she

identified that the biggest challenge she had faced in progressing her career was 'other people's perceptions and judgement of me as a black woman'. Elizabeth similarly assessed that her race and her gender combined to produce barriers to progression and, when asked if she could identify the separate impact of either factor, she responded:

> I would say both are a feature… I had to fight like mad the senior management team who were white middle class male – all of an age (Elizabeth).

Considering the same issue, Georgina responded:

> I don't know, it's a very interesting question… I really don't know (Georgina).

Notably, one BME participant had not experienced racism.

> Because of the circle I move in, the background I have, it hasn't really exposed me to those issues which people do come across, these problems and issues…The way I would conduct myself, the way I would present myself, I have got a lot of presence. The way I will say things – people will listen to me... so I don't think I have experienced those things (Kathryn).

However, Kathryn acknowledged the racism encountered by her BME colleagues.

> Whereas a few years ago I wouldn't have perhaps considered that, but I'm getting more open about understanding what actually goes on. There are fundamental issues, there's no doubt about that. Things are happening whether I have come across those real issues or not (Kathryn).

4.4.3.4 Pressure to act as tokens or role models

Participants reported occasions where they felt tokenised as a result of their minority status within college leadership. Illustratively, Sally faced questioning in an interview.

> The chair of the board of governors commented at my interview, 'I get told I should appoint more women. What do you say to that?' (Sally)

Elizabeth, an isolated BME leader, experienced disproportionate demands on

her time.

> You feel like the token, you're invited to every…meeting there is… You have to say 'Do you really want me to go? Is it something that's connected?' (Elizabeth)

Georgina felt under the gaze of others who saw her as a role model.

Other black women see me. They say, keep up the good work and the representation…People put more pressure on me than I do myself (Georgina).

Barbara rejected notions of being a role model – 'I'm just doing God's work'.

4.4.3.5 Family responsibilities

Fourteen of the sixteen participants had children, with family sizes ranging from one to four

children. These parents assessed that they could successfully balance family and career,

although they were willing to make adjustments.

> I've got two children now, also my husband. So I've made the decision I won't move them… If something comes up where I could commute, where I could travel there and back in a day, then I would apply (Joanna).

> I always accommodated things around the children… I enjoyed my work… But I wouldn't have done it if I'd felt the children were being in any way being neglected (Sally).

Only one participant rejected motherhood because it would restrict her career.

No children. I think that was a conscious decision because I do feel you can't have it all (Julie).

4.4.3.6 The long hours culture

Whilst several participants recognised the long hours culture as a challenge when balancing

work and family life, it did not deter them from career progression in the incumbency phase.

> Balancing all the different factors, all together, that's the biggest challenge, and the long hours culture (Elizabeth).

However, the long hours culture did influence Maureen and Helen's decisions in the divestiture

phase.

4.4.3.7 Role identity transformation

Despite their pioneering status, fourteen participants reported no difficulties in adapting their

role identity as they progressed to leadership. Only two younger white participants found this

a challenge.

The biggest challenge was making the transition from lecturer to manager… As a lecturer…I
could always get to the end of my work… Suddenly I had all this work and I could not see the
light at the end of the tunnel… So it was making the transition into a change of attitude, to
realise that you are never going to do it all (Joanna).

> For the first few weeks I thought, what on earth have I done?… I'd gone from a
> team where there were seven to just being me… But you get on or you go under,
> don't you? (Julie)

4.4.3.8 The most difficult challenge

Participants identified what for them was the most difficult challenge in the incumbency phase

although two did not identify any one challenge as most difficult. The responses revealed that

half the participants identified sexism and the masculinist culture as the biggest challenges.

The remainder cited isolation, racism, dealing with staff and the balance between home and

work as their most difficult challenges. All participants faced the additional challenge of

developing relationships with the mainly white male body of governors.

4.4.4 Relationships with college governors

The literature review in Chapter Two details the race and gender composition of governing

bodies whose powers include the appointment and removal of senior postholders. Except for

one college where one third of governors were female, participants reported that their

governors were mainly or all male and mainly or all white.   Maureen acted to counter this.

> There is currently one Afro-Caribbean female who I managed to source
> (Maureen).

Participants described encounters with governors when sexism, racism or negative

stereotyping occurred.

The old chair was a misogynist…but I wouldn't have survived if I hadn't worked with the
chairman (Rachael).
The all-male governors at Sally's college displayed sexism during her interview, asking what

her husband did, and the male principal informed her that although she was the best

candidate, the governors did not select her.   When governors subsequently appointed less

experienced male colleagues to other senior posts, Sally challenged their practices.

> I actually asked to see the chair of the corporation and it was a very difficult meeting… I wrote to the clerk of the corporation and requested a review of the process by which the short listing had been undertaken (Sally).

Personal and institutional racism in Elizabeth's dealings with governors led her to challenge their practices.

> The encounter left me scarred and scared… At that level in FE they don't like women like me…That level isn't comfortable… I watch it sometimes, at functions. I watch the dynamics, when they don't think I'm looking... It's not nice… Boards need to be fully representative of the community (Elizabeth).

Bryony found it impossible to develop positive relationships with governors.

> I could not be myself in that role… I found that the governors where I worked were older than myself, they were all male (Bryony).

Only one participant, a BME woman, spoke positively about her relationship with governors.

> The governors and the principal are very supportive. I came here, there was an agreement I would do a job here and they would support me for my next move (Kathryn).

Joanna and Maureen summed up the general approach.

> I'm very careful around the governors (Joanna).

> I always watch my p's and q's with them (Maureen).

Having progressed to leadership positions, participants developed varied leadership styles.

4.4.5 Leadership styles and approaches

Participants in post prior to incorporation explained how marketisation impacted on their leadership styles.

> I started off being very facilitatory…and moved into pace setting because we needed to go faster than most people wanted to go (Rachael).

Both white and BME participants used the language of the market in describing performative leadership approaches.

> I am a creative leader – visionary – very entrepreneurial – very product development and market development focused (Bryony).

> I tend to focus on the outputs rather than the inputs (Joanna).

> I am target driven (Georgina).

I'm really task focused and outcome driven – supportive at the same time, but accountability (Kathryn).

In describing their leadership styles, participants used language from leadership literature or training. Thus whilst both white and BME participants expressed preference for democratic approaches to leadership, they adopted directive or authoritarian styles because of managerialist imperatives.

I've only got one sort of leadership style… I suppose democratic would be the nearest to it… But when we have to make a decision they know it often has to be financially driven (Sheila).

Maureen initially described herself as 'very consultative' and 'never authoritarian' but then reflected further.

I have had on occasion to be more directive… You have got to accept the role that you've got, that things come at a price. Also I haven't got any problems about performance management (Maureen).

Joanna, Barbara and Elizabeth described a similar duality.

I tend to be quite a supportive leader… Having said that, I do set quite demanding workloads and demanding standards as well… I give them the job and tell them when I want it done by (Joanna).

I would probably use what I class as a basic style, it might be quite directive… There are times when I am consultative...but I do use the basic one if I want something quickly (Barbara).

I need a mixture of being autocratic when it's something urgent through to being balanced thereafter with allowing people some scope to develop their freedom (Elizabeth).

Julie, Sally and Barbara assessed people management skills as key to successful leadership.

You have to be able, through having a broad skills set and a broad experience of life, to be able to engage with the person sat across the table (Julie).

I don't shrink away from confrontation if it's necessary but I will always try to do things in a co-operative collaborative way if it's at all possible, and I'll use humour as a tool to actually get people on board (Sally).

Margaret recalled the challenges as an isolated BME leader in adopting a democratic approach.

I tried to negotiate with my team, and to have meetings when we would come to a consensus… I thought if I approached leadership in that way, it would happen that I would get a lot of people on my side. What actually happened was that some thought it was a weakness (Margaret).

Some participants abandoned their preferred democratic style when confronting sexism.

I'd naturally be a democratic leader but there are times when that doesn't work… Because of your gender, you do have to be a bit more authoritative than you would perhaps naturally be (Julie).

At heart I'm very democratic and like to involve staff… I think men beneath you can be problematic, and I've certainly, against my character, had to be very autocratic, particularly with dissenting males (Bryony).

Several participants were self-critical of their leadership. Helen described herself as 'bossy'.

Alice purported to 'lead by example' but critiqued herself for being 'too hands on'. Lily wanted

to be seen as 'inclusive, consultative and open', but assessed herself as 'controlling, …too

pushy and outspoken, too quick to jump to adverse conclusions, too quick to criticise, and

probably too negative'. Participants tended to blame themselves for difficulties they

encountered. Bryony lost self-belief, attributing sexism amongst staff to her own failures as a

leader.

> I was incredibly naïve… I find when I look back at how it was I am a very maternal leader, I treat all my staff like they're my babies, my children – which probably isn't very helpful. I would say now on reflection that I don't think I make a particularly good people manager
> (Bryony).

Joanna blamed her personal appearance for the sexism she faced in establishing her

leadership credibility.

> My image doesn't help. I've got blonde curly hair, long hair (Joanna).

Margaret critiqued mono-cultural leadership orthodoxy.

> It's white and it's Western because that is what matters… I went to a conference…They talked about factor 8, which was intuition, a sort of African and eastern kind of intuition as a leadership style. It is recognised and accepted as having factual evidence to support it... It is dismissed because it is not intellectual to a Western tradition… In the current models that we have in Western leadership, there is no place for that (Margaret).

4.4.5.1 Summing up approaches to leadership

Participants tended to adopt language from leadership training or literature. The majority

expressed preference for democratic leadership styles although they were willing to be

authoritative to secure managerialist imperatives or in response to sexism. Participants were

mindful of the impact of their leadership styles on others and there was a tendency to be self-

critical. The next section reveals their attitudes to leadership training.

4.4.6 Leadership training

No participant had undertaken FE national leadership training. There were differences in attitudes towards leadership training amongst white participants, and between white and BME participants.

4.4.6.1 White participants

Some white participants had experience of leadership training.

I did a very useful course on women and leadership (Rachael).

We did this Hay McBer leadership training and interestingly…the facilitator, …the feedback she gave to me was that I was the only one who challenged the principal (Sally).

Christine completed a skills analysis programme which revived her career ambitions and intended to undertake FE national leadership training. Julie had similar intentions. Joanna did not value this training despite acknowledging that 'it will help me speak the right speak'. Maureen's college did not support participation in national leadership training. The majority of white participants had not undertaken any formal leadership training and did not plan to do so.

4.4.6.2 Black Leadership Initiative (BLI)

No BME participants expressed interest in the national leadership training but they valued the BLI in helping to deal with barriers such as racism, isolation and tokenism.

I do think the programmes are quite successful… What the initiatives have done for me is that they have put the picture into another perspective, because everyone's truth is relative (Margaret).

Kathryn, initially dubious about strategies to promote BME leadership in FE, recognised potential benefits.

It's a step in the right direction… I think the BLI, the Network for Black Managers, are definitely a vehicle, a tool, in order to promote equality of opportunity, and recognition of finding those talents and potential to encourage and develop people further (Kathryn).

However, Margaret highlighted that completing BLI programmes did not increase opportunities for aspiring BME leaders.

The colleges make no attempt at all to say to those individuals, OK, you've done this dynamic programme, let's have a look at how we can move you forward, either internally or externally (Margaret).

Elizabeth critiqued the short term funding for the BLI, positing that long term interventions are required if racial equality is to be achieved.

Thus most participants showed little interest in national leadership training although BME participants were supportive of BLI programmes. The next section explores participants' career aims in this incumbency phase.

4.4.7 Career aims on incumbency

Participants were all ambitious to progress further within FE. In many instances, their aims crystallised around becoming vice principals and then principals. For two BME participants, these aspirations were driven by self-belief.

I see myself as a principal (Barbara).

> I decided the next steps will be - vice principal and principal… I'm a determined, focused sort of person and I believe in myself (Kathryn).

Others based their ambitions on external influences.

I went on a course… It made me crystallise my goals (Christine).

> I did get encouragement…from my previous principal, who kept saying to me that you're going to be a principal (Bryony).

Sally aspired to become a principal after becoming a vice principal, and Joanna envisaged a similar path.

> I think from round about the time when I was a Director, I realised I wanted to go all the way (Joanna).

Rachael was already a principal and a further six participants, four white and two BME, specifically aspired to become principals. Remaining participants were generically ambitious and aspired to progress further in FE although they had not crystallised their goals around principalship.

4.4.8 Summarising findings in the incumbency phase

There was high consistency in identifying sources of support from which participants benefited and challenges and barriers they faced as leaders, with BME participants facing the additional barrier of racism. Whilst many

participants expressed preference for democratic leadership styles they

also demonstrated willingness to adopt more directive styles. There was

little evidence of involvement in leadership training although BME

participants held positive views of the BLI. Experiences in the accession

and incumbency phases impacted on participants' career aims in the

divestiture phase, which are next discussed.

4.5 DIVESTITURE PHASE

4.5.1 Introduction

The divestiture phase in this research explores participants' ambitions in

progressing from the leadership posts which they held when interviewed.

Within typical college hierarchies, a director post could lead to a position as

senior postholder, such as deputy, vice or assistant principal, then to

principal.

4.5.2 Participants aspiring to become principals

Three white and two BME participants retained their ambition to become

principals in the divestiture phase. White participants Julie and Joanna and

BME participants Barbara and Kathryn revealed on-going self-belief.

> I think that I could do it. I think I could lead a college into successful
> times (Julie).

> I do want to be a principal… I never thought that being a woman
> would hold me back (Joanna).

> I'm sure I will become a principal… This year I have got this goal that
> I want to become a college principal (Kathryn).

> I am acquiring the skills sets to move into that, and the confidence
> level (Barbara).

Christine, the third white participant in this cohort, revived her ambitions

and self-belief after completing a personal development programme.

> I went on a course… On the first day you had to write a goal for yourself... It made me challenge my comfort zone… I wrote – to become a vice principal… I recognised what the programme calls my limiting beliefs and how I could overcome these… Now I would like to become a principal (Christine).

These five participants expressed self-belief and retained ambition to

progress to become principals by the divestiture phase. The majority

decided differently.

4.5.3 Participants not aspiring to become principals

4.5.3.1 Intending to stay in FE with no further progression

Five participants, four white and one BME, lost ambition as a result of the

barriers they encountered.

If you had asked me that 5 years ago, I would have said yes. But I think now –

no I wouldn't… I just got worn out trying to break down the barriers (Sally).

> I didn't want to go after any jobs which would appear to be a promotion… I didn't have the confidence (Alice).
>
> Nowadays I only come to work to be with my staff, I'm not motivated anymore (Lily).

Maureen rejected progression to principal because of the long hours culture.

> My current principal is a workaholic. He is at work every day around eight o'clock…Three or four evenings he will be there until nine. He doesn't take all his holiday. My experience is most principals are like that (Maureen).

Georgina, the only BME member and the most optimistic within this cohort,

intended to remain in her current post although she did not rule out a future

career change.

> We all look in the papers and who knows? (Georgina)

These five participants abandoned ambition for further progression within FE as a result of barriers encountered during incumbency and withdrew from the pool of aspiring principals.

4.5.3.2 Seeking to leave FE

Six participants had decided to leave their colleges. Two gave positive reasons. Rachael and Sheila aspired to work for national organisations contributing to FE development.   The remaining four participants expressed disillusionment with college leadership. Bryony lost self-belief as a result of masculinist culture, macho-management and sexism and was seeking a complete career change. Margaret, bruised by racism when seeking promotion, held very negative views of opportunities for BME people in college leadership.

> The people who work in FE have their own arguments for why the structures have an apartheid looking framework, in terms of how the senior management have always looked the same and continue to look the same in most colleges (Margaret).

Helen and Elizabeth formed negative views of a principal's role and also decided to pursue careers outside FE.

> I saw the role as being much more of a business manager. I didn't like the politic-y bit… I saw the principal as being yet one step further removed from what I thought was the job, which was making things really work for students (Helen).

> The job of principal is not a challenge, it's a fight… I would not consider staying in FE and progressing to be a principal (Elizabeth).

In a rare flash of humour amongst these participants, Elizabeth articulated her

vision for her future: 'I want to be this woman who wears purple and orange and

yellow!'

4.6 Summarising career aims in the divestiture phase

Although all participants were ambitious for progression in FE in the
accession and incumbency phases, only five (31%) aspired to become
principals by the divestiture phase (Table 14). The majority made decisions
which depleted the talent pool from which future college leaders might be
drawn, potentially further impacting on race and gender under-
representation in college leadership.

Table 14: Participants' career aims and self-belief in the divestiture phase

Pseudonym	Career aim in divestiture phase	Self-belief in divestiture phase
Alice	Remain in current post. Not seeking further progression in FE or elsewhere	Lost self-belief
Barbara	Aspired to progress to be a principal	High self-belief
Bryony	Leaving FE sector for period of reflection	Lost self-belief
Christine	Aspired to progress to be a principal	Retained self-belief
Elizabeth	Aiming to leave FE and move into a different public sector	Retained self-belief
Georgina	Remain in current post and see what opportunities outside FE arise	Retained self-belief
Helen	Leaving FE to join national organisation	Retained self-belief
Joanna	Aspired to progress to be a principal	High self-belief
Julie	Aspired to progress to be a principal	High self-belief
Kathryn	Aspired to progress to be a principal	High self-belief
Lily	Remain in current post. Not seeking further progression in FE or elsewhere	Some loss of self-belief
Margaret	Leaving FE for self employment	Retained self-belief
Maureen	Remain in current post. Not seeking further progression in FE or elsewhere	Retained self-belief
Rachael	Leaving FE for work with national organisation	Retained self-belief
Sally	Remain in current post. Not seeking further progression in FE or elsewhere	Lost self-belief

| Sheila | Not seeking further progression in FE and looking for work with national organisation | Retained self-belief |

The findings revealed in this chapter are supplemented by additional extracts presented in Appendix 11 (page 303). The next chapter offers a discussion of the findings, set in juxtaposition with the literature.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins by discussing findings from the postal questionnaire.

The rest of the chapter is organised around the five research questions set

out in Chapter One, discussing and interpreting the findings linked to the

literature review and pointing towards recommendations and conclusions

and contribution to knowledge which will be further developed in Chapter

Six. The final section considers whether the aims of the research have

been achieved.

5.1 DISCUSSING FINDINGS FROM THE POSTAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Findings from the postal questionnaire sent to West Midlands FE colleges

replicated national findings that women are under-represented within

college leadership. The proportion of women principals in the West

Midlands was similar to national percentages, but it is not possible to depict

women's representation nationally within FE leadership by race/ethnicity.

Table 15 reveals what is known as highlighted in the literature review.

Table 15: Leadership by gender and race/ethnicity

Colleges	Women principals	% women senior managers	% BME senior managers (men and women)

All colleges	17% in 1997 (Cole, 2000) 1 BME woman in 2002 (Commission for Black Staff in FE, 2002) 38% in 2011 (Women's Leadership Network, 2012) including 9 BME (Network for Black Professionals, 2011)	43.8% in 2008/9 (Lifelong Learning UK, 2011a) 45% in 2009-10 (Lifelong Learning UK, 2011b) 46% in 2011 (Women's Leadership Network, 2012)	1% of principals in 2001 (Commission for Black Staff in FE, 2002) 3.9% of senior managers in 2001 (Commission for Black Staff in FE, 2002) 3.5% of senior managers in 2008-9 (Lifelong Learning UK, 2009b) 4.1% of senior managers in 2009-10 (Lifelong Learning UK, 2011b)
Colleges	**% women principals**	**% women senior managers**	**BME senior managers (men and women)**
West Midlands colleges	33% in 2005, all white women (Postal questionnaire) 36% in 2012 (Women's Leadership Network, 2012)	28% in 2005 (Postal questionnaire)	10 senior management posts held by BME staff (Network for Black Managers, 2005a) 4 (3%) senior management posts held by BME women in 2005 (Postal questionnaire)

5.2 RESEARCH QUESTION 1: WHAT WERE THE FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCED THE PARTICIPANTS' EARLY AMBITIONS AND WHY DID THEY CHOOSE TO WORK WITHIN THE FE SECTOR?

The first research question explores influences which shaped participants' ambitions and underpinned their entry to FE. This relates to the formation stage of career (Gronn and Ribbins, 1996) which explores family backgrounds, parental attitudes to education, schooling and early career choices. The importance of this phase lies in the tenet that 'biographical evidence discloses the genesis and development of leaders' value frameworks and workstyles throughout their careers' (Gronn and Ribbins, 1996 p457).

5.2.1 Discussing and comparing findings on family background with the literature

The literature posits that women's career aspirations are partly shaped by family background (White et al, 1992), but there were no discernible patterns within the backgrounds of the white women who progressed to become school head teachers in Hall's (1996) study. The findings similarly revealed no discernible patterns in relation to both white and BME participants, who came from a range of family backgrounds and whose parents held varied occupations (Chapter Four, Table 11).

The literature posits that successful white women (White et al, 1992) and BME women (Davidson, 1997) were stimulated by mothers who developed careers outside the home. The findings did not demonstrate this, instead revealing that few mothers had professional jobs and many did not work outside the home although almost all were supportive towards their daughters' education. Further, White et al (1992) found that women who achieved career success tended to be closely supported by their fathers. The findings were not wholly consistent with this literature as some participants' fathers were supportive but others less so.

Findings relating to the attitudes of BME parents align to the literature. For many BME families, educational achievement is regarded as vital in providing opportunities for a better life (Mirza, 1992). Accordingly, BME families tend to place high importance on encouraging and supporting their children in striving for educational success (Mirza, 1992). BME participants all reported positive parental attitudes towards their educational

achievements, describing family cultures where parents took a keen interest in their children's education. However, whilst over half of the mothers of the BME women managers in Davidson's (1997) study held professional jobs, this was not the case in this research. Only Elizabeth's mother had a professional occupation as a nurse, whilst Margaret's mother worked in a launderette and the mothers of Barbara, Georgina and Kathryn had no work outside the home.

In some families, the educational achievement of daughters is less important than that of sons (Drew and Demack, 1998) and some BME cultural norms can impact negatively on girls' education (Davidson, 1997). Barbara and Kathryn described family cultures where, despite support for education, they were disadvantaged by their gender. Kathryn's education ended when she married at a young age although her husband continued with his studies. Barbara fought for parental consent to attend a more academic school than that attended by her older brother when her uncle advised her father not to act contrary to tradition. Reluctance to prioritise girls' education was not confined to BME families as it also impacted on white participants Bryony, Helen and Lily.

Some research suggests that where women are the first born they tend to be high achievers (White et al, 1992). Whilst five (37%) participants were either first born or only children, the remainder were differently located within their families. There were no trends linking family position to career achievements.

5.2.2 Discussing and comparing findings on schooling with the literature

The literature review revealed that women's career aspirations are partly shaped by school (White et al, 1992). All the women head teachers in Hall's (1996) study stayed at school until the age of 18. Ten participants stayed at school until the age of 18 and were encouraged by teachers to progress to higher education. Margaret, the sole BME participant in this cohort, found this unexpected because neither she nor anyone in her family had experience of university education.

The main influence on the career choices of white women school head teachers was the values of the teachers in their schools (Hall, 1996). These women absorbed a vision of a supportive and effective school environment and sought to recreate this in their own schools and in their approaches to leadership (Hall, 1996). These findings were not replicated by findings in this study. No participant made reference to teachers as role models either in the formation phase of career or when enacting leadership. None of the participants entered FE because of any desire to recreate their school environment or values.

Research relating to the schooling of BME girls found that some teachers held low expectations of their potential and did not encourage ambition (Phoenix, 2009; Leibowitz et al, 2010) and the findings aligned to this. Elizabeth's disengagement from school provided a stark example of the

impact of negative teacher attitudes. Barbara and Georgina were discouraged from taking GCE O levels, although both succeeded in passing these qualifications in FE. Although their experiences took place many years ago, data continue to reveal 'the level 2 attainment gap between Black and other ethnic groups' (Department for Education, 2009 p2).   Margaret was the only BME participant to report teacher encouragement towards her educational achievements.

An emergent finding was the role of FE in the continued education of participants who did not progress to university on leaving school. Four of the five BME participants undertook further studies within FE.   Barbara and Georgina progressed directly from school to full time courses in FE and later undertook further part time studies, whilst Elizabeth and Kathryn attended adult returner programmes before progressing to more advanced qualifications. White participants Lily and Joanna, who did not undertake any study for several years after leaving school, also chose to join programmes in FE colleges. The FE sector provided an environment where these participants succeeded as learners, although it was not able to offer a similarly supportive environment for some of these same participants when they became leaders. The literature confirms the high proportion of women students in FE, both as school leavers and as adult returners (Learning and Skills Council, 2007) and the relatively high representation of BME students (Commission for Black Staff in Further Education, 2002). More research is needed to develop understandings of why colleges are able to support both

white and BME women as students but significantly less able to support them as leaders.

5.2.3 Discussing and comparing findings on early career ambitions with the literature

The literature review in Chapter Two revealed that women's initial career aspirations are shaped by influences including family, school, peers, social class and ethnicity (White et al, 1992; Aveling, 2002; Phoenix, 2009). The white women head teachers in Hall's (1996) study indicated that their choice of a teaching career was linked to a strong desire to teach their chosen subjects. This finding was only partially replicated in this study in that Alice and Maureen made career choices based on this, but only two other participants planned to become teachers in the formation phase. The majority of graduate participants chose initial careers quite casually (Chapter Four, Table 12). Two chose accountancy, in each case at the suggestion of others. One started work in a finance company and one in a housing association, in both instances because the jobs were near to their homes. The literature focuses variously on white women school heads (Hall, 1996), BME men and women school heads (McKenley and Gordon, 2002) and BME women in business and management (Davidson, 1997). Although Ainley and Bailey (1997) refer to men moving from industry to teach their trades in FE, little is known about factors underpinning women's decisions to develop careers in FE and this gap in the literature offers opportunities for further research.

The literature posits that the majority of Western women expect to get married and have children alongside a career, and although they feel a sense of agency in making career choices, these choices are nevertheless constrained by the multiplicity of their ambitions (Aveling, 2002). The findings partially align to Aveling's (2002) research because participants who progressed from school to university described a sense of agency in making initial career choices and in changing these over time. The white female head teachers chose teaching because it was compatible with family life (Hall, 1996). The findings within this study partly align to this research in that they reveal that family commitments influenced several participants' decisions to work in FE. As mothers of young children, Christine, Helen, Margaret, Rachael and Sally found the flexibility within FE commensurate with family responsibilities. However, none of the participants made initial career choices with future family commitments in mind, which challenges Gronn's (1999a) analysis that women's careers are constrained primarily by lack of ambition and family commitments. Further, the findings differ from Gronn (1999a) because participants did not abandon ambitions of future career successes because of family responsibilities. Julie was the only participant who decided not to have children so that she could give high priority to her career 'because I do feel you can't have it all'. Remaining participants felt able to progress to leadership alongside family responsibilities.

Further, Aveling (2002) and Gronn (1999a) ignore the impact of race/ethnicity on career choice, focusing on family commitments and

personal ambition. This illustrates the lack of inclusive discourses relating to women's career choices. Race/ethnicity are important factors impacting on career choice because research demonstrates that some teachers do not encourage BME girls in the same ways as their white counterparts (Phoenix, 2009). The early career aims of all but one of the BME participants were restricted by their school achievements. Only Margaret achieved sufficient qualifications to progress directly to university. The remainder, bolstered by ambition and self-belief, embarked on further study to improve their qualifications and enhance life-chances. This pattern mirrors Davidson's (1997) findings relating to the career paths of successful BME women in business and management.

5.2.4 Summarising the discussion of findings in relation to the first research question

The first research question explores factors which influenced participants' early ambitions. The literature revealed that women's career aims are influenced by a mix of family, school, peers, social class and ethnicity (White et al, 1992; Aveling, 2002; Phoenix, 2009). The findings show that for these participants there was no discernible overall pattern within this mix of influences. However, there was a tendency for the positive influence of school to be more prevalent amongst white participants than BME participants in line with the literature (Davidson, 1997; Phoenix, 2009). Participants exercised greater agency in their initial career choices than the literature suggests (Gronn, 1999a; Aveling, 2002). The findings did not align to the stance that women's career aims were 'impeded by an intolerable burden of domestic and

family commitments' (Gronn, 1999a p104) nor did participants 'lack the

ambition' (p104) for career development.

The findings show that the majority of participants made initial career

choices quite randomly and only two made FE a first career choice. White

participants were more influenced by others in making career choices than

their BME counterparts, who tended to rely on self-belief and ambition.

There are national concerns relating to women's under-representation in the

top echelons within many areas of public life, including the judiciary,

company directorships and many other professions, as well as in FE,

highlighting the need for further research into factors which influence

women's career choices. The next section presents a discussion of findings

relating to participants' career progression once they had entered FE.

5.3 RESEARCH QUESTION 2: HOW DO PARTICIPANTS CONSTRUCT THE NOTION OF A
CAREER IN FE IN RELATION TO THEIR OWN BIOGRAPHIES AND WHAT FACTORS
HAVE INHIBITED OR SUPPORTED CAREER DEVELOPMENT?
The second research question explores participants' understanding of career

and the development of their FE careers, identifying factors which inhibited

career development and sources of support which encouraged this

development.

5.3.1 Discussing and comparing findings on understandings of career

with the literature

Evetts (1990) proposed a typology of career amongst women. Firstly, some

women pursued an accommodated career, when no promotion was sought or

accepted. Lily demonstrated this in the formation phase when she worked in a

bank after leaving school, having no ambition to undertake training or progression. The second typology is the antecedent career, when career is given the highest priority (Evetts, 1990). Alice, Barbara, Bryony, Elizabeth, Joanna, Julie and Rachael moved into this typology in the accession phase, joined by Kathryn in the incumbency phase and Christine in the divestiture phase. The third typology is the two stage career, when career development is delayed for family reasons (Evetts, 1990). Several participants at times gave their careers lower priority for family reasons. The fourth typology is a subsequent career when initially there are no career aims but these emerge later, as demonstrated by Elizabeth, Joanna and Lily, and the fifth typology is the compensatory career, where a woman becomes career focused to compensate for family unhappiness (Evetts, 1990). Alice, Christine, Georgina, Margaret, Rachael and Sally were divorced parents with sole responsibilities for their children, whilst Helen focused on career following her husband's death. This typology provided a useful framework within which to locate participants' careers, but it did not link career aims to career phases and it was notable that the majority tended to move across these typologies, not becoming embedded within any one. Evetts's (1990) typology provided a more useful framework than Gronn's (1999a) analysis because it highlighted that during working life women's careers can accommodate to family responsibilities without loss of overall ambition. The findings further demonstrated that many women's career trajectories are not linear (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003).

The literature posits that women and men are more likely to progress to educational leadership if they develop formal career plans, which evidence 'purposeful engagement' (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003 p491) with leadership transition. However, the majority of BME school teachers who were pursuing a leadership development programme tailored for BME staff rejected career planning as pointless, either for reasons relating to fate or karma, or for reasons relating to racism in their schools (Coleman and Campbell-Stephens, 2010). Whilst the majority of participants in this study did not plan their careers in a formal sense, they demonstrated 'purposeful engagement' (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003 p491) by their determination to progress their careers in FE, taking advantage of opportunities which arose. Only Elizabeth adopted a formalised approach to career planning in the accession phase joined by Kathryn during the incumbency phase and Christine on divestiture. Remaining participants had no specific career plans although they displayed ambition, described high self-belief and took advantage of opportunities.

Findings revealed that many white participants benefited from informal selection processes, taking additional duties which broadened their experience and opened up further opportunities. It was notable that only one BME participant benefited from informal practices when Kathryn was encouraged by the principal to accept first a teaching post and then a middle management role. Elizabeth, a BME participant, was highly critical of these practices and their potentially racist outcomes. Unfair recruitment and selection practices in FE have been critiqued as socially divisive, producing racial inequalities (Commission for Black Staff in Further Education, 2002; Mackay and Etienne,

2006; Sargeant, 2007). These inequalities were demonstrated when as a result of racist selection practices Margaret was excluded from opportunities to which she legitimately aspired and hit the 'concrete ceiling' which Davidson (1997 p88) depicted. Practices which impact more favourably on white women than on BME women contribute towards the under-representation of BME women within FE leadership and potentially contaminate relationships, creating a binary whereby the threshold of the 'glass ceiling' (Hall, 1996 p1) for BME women is set lower than for their white counterparts. If issues relating to inequalities and under-representation are to be addressed, college leaders should take note of the Good Practice Guides published by the Commission for Black Staff in Further Education (2003) which apply both to formal appointments and also when allocating duties which can enhance promotion prospects. All participants had, through the variety of routes detailed in Chapter Four, come to work in FE and by the accession phase had successfully achieved the transition to leadership.

5.3.2 Discussing and comparing factors identified as preventing or inhibiting career development with the literature

There was notable consensus amongst participants in identifying barriers which inhibited and in some cases prevented further career progression within FE. Whilst Gronn's (1999a) analysis focused on agency, participants' accounts highlighted mainly structural barriers impeding progression.

5.3.2.1 Sexism and masculinist culture

Bourdieu (2001) posits that those who assert masculine domination justify their approach as based on biological differences between the sexes whereby the social order positions women as subordinates. Following this analysis, participants could be assessed as having breached this social order in becoming leaders within white masculinist male dominated FE (Kerfoot and Whitehead, 1998; Cole, 2000). They thus encountered 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu, 2001 p1) from these male leaders, facing hostility based on 'a culture of male bloody mindedness' (Gronn, 1999a p104). Managerialism led to masculinist approaches as key characteristics of college leadership (Randle and Brady, 1997; Kerfoot and Whitehead, 1998; Gleeson and Shain, 1999; Deem et al, 2000; Shain, 2000). Older participants attested to sexism and masculinist culture as barriers to women's career progression in FE around the time of incorporation (Wild, 1994). Illustratively, Rachael was refused progression to faculty head because the college adopted a normative male leadership orthodoxy. Sally's progression was blocked by the sexism of a male principal and male governors at interview.   This hostility in job interviews is echoed in the experiences of women head teachers (Hall, 1996) and in accounts given by BME staff to the Commission for Black Staff in Further Education (2002). Despite the increase in the proportion of female managers, younger white participants also reported sexism within more modern FE culture which mirrored Fuller's (2009) findings in relation to younger female school heads. Joanna felt under greater pressure than her male counterparts to prove she

'could be tough' because of negative stereotyping based on gender and personal appearance, echoing Carli's (1999) assertion that 'women have to outperform men in order to be considered equally competent' (p85). In the accession phase of career, participants demonstrated their refusal to be complicit in the white male domination of FE leadership despite this sexism.

5.3.2.2 Isolation

The literature demonstrates how institutional masculinity which pervades discourses of power and which shapes masculinist work cultures can isolate women who do not embrace these cultures (Ozga, 1993; Maille, 1999; Pillay, 2006). Older white and BME participants, who took up leadership roles at a time when they represented a very small minority of the FE leadership cohort, experienced similar isolation to that reflected in Kerfoot and Whitehead's (1998) research. Bourdieu's (2001) analysis helps to explain why the predominantly white male leaders isolated the few women leaders. Rachael had to network outside the area where she worked to identify other women in similar roles, whilst Elizabeth relied on her community networks to combat isolation. Women who are members of overwhelmingly male management teams are often overlooked (Ozga, 1993) and under pressure to perform 'like men' (Leonard, 1998 p75). Helen, the only woman in a team of ten, found herself very isolated when regarded as 'one of the boys'. The fact that younger white participants did not report isolation is supported by data mapping the increase in women in FE leadership from 2003 onwards (Lifelong Learning UK, 2009b) and by the softening of the macho-management leadership culture (Lumby, 2002).

Barbara's and Elizabeth's isolation as the only BME members of their college management teams also reflected the literature (Commission for Black Staff in Further Education, 2002; Mackay and Etienne, 2006; Sargeant, 2007) and echoed experiences of BME women managers in industry (Davidson, 1997). BME women experience isolation as 'a black female body out of place in a white institution' (Mirza, 2009 p5) and participants gave accounts of racism.

5.3.2.3 Racism

Bourdieu's (2001) analysis that those who challenge the social order created by dominant white males face hostility was centred on white maleness, but this could also be applied to challenges to the social order mounted by BME women. When BME women make claims to be included in leadership discourses they have 'to cope with the dynamics of both sexism and racism in inter-personal relationships and interactions' (Davidson, 1997 p48). All but one of the BME participants experienced racism in FE. Barbara described a white male colleague's racism in excluding her from communications within the senior management team whilst Elizabeth fought institutional racism at many levels. Georgina gave a graphic account of racist responses to her arrival in college. Margaret faced racist recruitment and selection practices when the college adopted a normative white orthodoxy for leadership roles. Exceptionally Kathryn had not personally experienced racism in FE although she learned through BME networks that racist practices were widespread. The racism encountered or acknowledged

by BME participants reflected Davidson's (1997) and Kanter's (1997) findings of white managers' negative responses to the legitimate career aspirations of BME staff, aligning to literature on racism in FE (Commission for Black Staff in Further Education, 2002; Mackay and Etienne, 2006; Sargeant, 2007).

In terms of the literature relating to the impact of the intersectionality of gender and race/ethnicity on women's careers (Crenshaw, 1991), the findings demonstrate that these participants did not separately analyse the impact of gender and race as barriers to their career progression. However, they acknowledged that these two aspects of their identities contributed significantly to the barriers they faced in progressing their careers in FE, in line with findings in the schools sector (Coleman and Campbell-Stephens, 2010).

It has been previously argued that leadership debates in UK educational research should extend to issues of race/ethnicity as well as to those of gender. This would challenge 'the dominant perspective' (Kohli, 2009 p238), which in FE tends to be white and male, in its commitment to social justice (Hughes and Giles, 2010). In calling for such debates in the schools sector, Blackmore (2006) posits that 'addressing diversity normatively would mean discussing what fairness and diversity means…and how they are operationalized through policy and practice' (p195). The findings highlight the need to extend Blackmore's (2006) call for 'a transformative discourse to diversify school management and leadership' (p192) to include FE.

5.3.2.4 Pressure to act as role models or tokens

Because women have long been under-represented in college leadership, some participants faced pressure to act as role models or tokens. These findings aligned to the literature (Hall, 1996; Kanter, 1997; Reay and Ball, 2000; Collins and Singh, 2006; Fuller, 2009). Helen found herself tokenised as 'the woman' in a team of men. BME participants faced the dual pressures of minority status based on gender and race/ethnicity (Crenshaw, 1991; Davidson, 1997), because 'our arrival is read as evidence of commitment, of change, of progress' (Ahmed, 2009 p41). As the only BME member of the leadership team, Elizabeth was requested to undertake additional duties when the college wanted a BME presence. Barbara and Georgina experienced pressure to act as role models for BME staff, demonstrating that minorities face additional challenges based on their minority status (Kanter, 1997). Conversely Sheila, a white participant, explained a positive aspect of tokenism, perceiving that colleges with male leadership teams sought to appoint a woman to improve the gender balance.

5.3.2.5 Family commitments

Gronn (1999a) posits that women's agency is mainly responsible for their under-representation in leadership positions because of family constraints. However, only one participant regarded family commitments as incompatible with career success. The fourteen participants who had children did not see family commitments as a barrier to career progression although some made temporary adjustments to their work patterns in line with Aveling's (2002)

typology of women's careers. Helen, Kathryn, Lily, Margaret and Sally all worked part time while their children were young, whilst Joanna decided not to apply to a college outside the area until her children left school. Conversely, Alice, Barbara, Georgina, Maureen and Rachael continued to progress their careers alongside their family commitments. All participants with children demonstrated their agency and progressed to leadership, thus the findings challenge Gronn's (1999a) stance that family commitments are a key barrier to women's progression to leadership.

5.3.2.6 Long hours culture

Incompatibility between family commitments and the long hours culture within FE was reported as a barrier to women's leadership in the literature (Leonard, 1998; Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Women's Leadership Network, 2010). Participants did not identify this barrier in the accession or incumbency phase and in this regard, the findings differed from the literature. Several adjusted their working hours whilst their children were young, benefiting from the flexibility afforded by the sector rather than being deterred by the long hours culture. However, one participant viewed the role of a principal negatively because of the long hours culture and this shaped her decisions in the divestiture phase.

5.3.2.7 Role identity transformation

Role identity transformation 'is an essential component of principal making' (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003 p495) and involves a change of mindset from a teaching role to 'a new self-identity' (p495). A small proportion of US

schoolteachers found this transformation difficult and the findings align to Browne-Ferrigno's (2003) findings in this regard. Only Joanna and Julie found the transformation to leadership a challenge, but quickly adapted their identities to meet the demands of their leadership roles. None of the other participants found transforming their role identities a challenge despite isolation through gender or race/ethnicity. The next section explores factors identified as supporting progression towards leadership.

5.3.3 Discussing and comparing factors identified as promoting career development with the literature

As with factors inhibiting participants' career development, there was consensus about factors supporting career progression.

5.3.3.1 Support from role models and mentors

Browne-Ferrigno (2003) posits that a key element of successful transition to leadership is 'socialisation' (p485) which includes opportunities to be supported by and to learn from existing leaders. White women head teachers described their school teachers as positive role models (Hall, 1996) and aspiring BME school head teachers valued BME heads who acted as trainers (Ogunbawo, 2012). No participant made any reference to role models from school although Margaret was mentored to progress to university by a white male school teacher. Many women school leaders benefit from supportive male colleagues acting as informal mentors (Evetts, 1990; Hall, 1996; Coleman, 2002; Fuller, 2009). The findings demonstrate that most white participants were similarly encouraged and supported by

white male colleagues acting as informal mentors, creating ties across gender boundaries (Butler, 2004) which mitigated against their isolation as women. Additionally, several white participants received support from other women who acted as informal mentors and role models. Whilst emancipatory praxis is not the prerogative of either white or BME women, expectations lie more heavily on those women who hold leadership positions because they are assumed to have experienced the effects of gender and/or racial inequality (Grundy, 1993).

Davidson (1997) highlighted the absence of BME role models in management roles within the majority of workplaces and also the value of same race mentoring. Elizabeth described the influence of an older man within her community who mentored her after she became disillusioned with school and whose influence was ongoing. In the context of school leadership development programmes, Ogunbawo (2012) found that ambitious BME teachers placed particular value on mentoring provided by BME head teachers and trainers. The Commission for Black Staff in Further Education (2002) noted the absence of role models for BME staff in FE and called for tailored mentoring and support for aspiring leaders. BME participants, who experienced mixed levels of mentoring and support from white colleagues, welcomed national mentoring and support schemes within the BLI whilst acknowledging their limitations. Whilst Elizabeth, Georgina and Margaret described positive support and mentoring from white women colleagues, Barbara did not, and Kathryn rejected the notion of white women as role models. However, Kathryn was the only BME participant who

described support from a white male principal who encouraged her to undertake firstly part time teaching and later a full time course leadership role. The findings demonstrate that the dual factors of race/ethnicity and gender impact negatively on the likelihood of white men acting as mentors for BME women (Davidson, 1997).

5.3.3.2 Networks

A small group of white participants valued networks as sources of support, placing a higher value on networks than women head teachers (Hall, 1996). However, none of the participants were members of the Women's Leadership Network which aims to represent the interests of FE women leaders (Women's Leadership Network, 2007). Joanna opposed women-only networks but benefited from a wider professional network whose female members supported her when she took on a new role.

BME participants tended to value networks more than their white counterparts, with the focus of networks being on race/ethnicity rather than gender. The importance of BME networks in providing an antidote to the isolation of many BME professionals was recognised by the Commission for Black Staff in Further Education (2002), by aspiring BME school head teachers (Ogunbawo, 2012) and in US research conducted by Becker (cited in Davidson, 1997). Barbara was instrumental in establishing one such network, whilst Margaret's university experience was enhanced through networking with BME postgraduate students and Elizabeth retained her community networks established after leaving school. The findings

demonstrate that supportive networks can help to counter isolation. Recent collaboration between the Women's Leadership Network and the Network for Black Professionals (Network for Black Professionals, 2010) may represent the start of new FE networks, creating ties across racial and gender boundaries (Butler, 2004). These might contribute to new talent management strategies similar to some local authority initiatives designed to support potential school leaders (Rhodes, 2012; Rhodes and Brundrett, 2012).

5.3.3.3 Support from family and friends

The white women head teachers (Hall, 1996) and the BME women managers (Davidson, 1997) placed high value on support from families and friends in shaping career aims and supporting progression, and the findings aligned to this literature. Participants whose marriages lasted benefited from their husbands' support. Many spoke warmly of friends and family members who supported and encouraged them. Rachael listed the many friends on whose support she relied. Bryony, Joanna and Sheila were encouraged by friends to change careers. Davidson (1997) found that BME women managers were more likely to find support outside the workplace than within it, and the findings reflect this, demonstrating the high value BME participants placed on family and friendship networks. Margaret relied on family members for childcare, whilst Elizabeth established a lifelong friendship with a mentor within her community.

5.3.3.4 Self-belief

The white women head teachers all acknowledged 'an inner core of self certainty' (Hall, 1996 p111) which fluctuated according to the challenges they faced but was never lost. Most participants similarly acknowledged that their career ambitions and successes were underpinned by self-belief. White participants Helen, Rachael and Sheila progressed because they believed they could do better than the men around them. Although Joanna and Julie faced feelings of insecurity when first appointed to leadership positions their self-belief saw them through. However, the divestiture phase revealed that some white participants lost self-belief as a result of their experiences.

Whilst the majority of the BME FE middle managers in Mackay and Etienne's (2006) study lost self-belief as a result of their experiences within their colleges, this was not replicated by these BME participants, whose self-belief remained a constant despite barriers and challenges encountered within FE. Like the white women head teachers (Hall, 1996) they also regarded self-belief as the key driver which underpinned career development, with Barbara, Georgina and Kathryn expressly attributing self-belief as the source of their confidence for the future. The findings align to emerging literature which identifies self-belief as a key factor in promoting leadership development in schools (Rhodes, 2012). The need for further work to give greater insights into how self-belief is both built and sustained is proposed in the concluding chapter.

5.3.4 Summing up the discussion relating to the second research question

Although the findings did not align to research positing that those with formal career plans are more likely to progress to leadership, the findings clearly demonstrate that in the accession phase of their FE careers all participants were ambitious for transition to leadership (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). The findings challenge Gronn (1999a) and demonstrate that the barriers faced by these participants were largely structural and included sexism, racism and masculinist culture and leadership orthodoxy (Cole, 2000; Women's Leadership Network, 2009, 2010). The combination of these structural barriers in the accession and incumbency phases challenged but did not deter participants' 'purposeful engagement' (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003 p491) with transition to senior leadership. These findings highlight the need to embed gender and race/ethnic diversity into FE leadership discourses.

The findings demonstrate trustworthiness through the high levels of consistency within participants' accounts of the barriers they faced and similar consistency in identifying the support which sustained them. In this regard there were differences between white and BME participants because almost all BME participants encountered the additional barrier of racism. They also experienced less support in the workplace than their white counterparts which is consistent with the literature (Mackay and Etienne, 2006). This is an important finding because the literature posits that active support and encouragement at work is a key factor supporting progression to principalship (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). Conversely, BME participants

maintained self-belief in the face of barriers to a greater degree than their white counterparts. FE leadership discourses tend to focus on either gender or race/ethnicity, but both white and BME women's voices need to be heard if inequalities of gender and race/ethnicity in college leadership are to be addressed. An inclusive leadership discourse which can foreground and unite the experiences of women whilst at the same time recognising difference could enhance leadership praxis through embedding perspectives which have wider resonance for both staff and students within FE. The next section discusses findings in relation to the third research question.

5.4 RESEARCH QUESTION 3: WHAT STRATEGIES AND TACTICS DID PARTICIPANTS ADOPT IN ENGAGING WITH THE ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE WITHIN FE?

Participants' responses to the organisational culture and practice resulting from incorporation, when marketisation and managerialism became dominant (Ainley and Bailey, 1997; Randle and Brady, 1997) form the basis of this inquiry.

5.4.1 Discussing and comparing responses to organisational culture with the literature

Gleeson and Shain (1999) identified a typology of middle managers' responses to managerialism, namely willing compliance, strategic compliance and unwilling compliance, and Gunter et al (2003) identified the additional response of pragmatic compliance. Half of the participants willingly complied (Gleeson and Shain, 1999) with the managerialist and marketised ethos in the accession phase of their careers, benefiting from new opportunities for progression. Some participants such as Joanna secured middle management posts in roles where their ability to use 'womanly skills' (Gleeson and Shain, 1999 p477) to persuade others to adapt to the new priorities was valued within the masculinist working

environment. This cohort embraced managerialism in the accession phase, adopting the language of the market. Illustratively, Bryony described herself as 'entrepreneurial', Georgina as 'target driven', Joanna 'focused on outputs rather than inputs' and on 'value for money', and Kathryn was 'outcome driven'.

The other half of the participants were less enthusiastic in accepting the changes but, similarly ambitious to take advantage of new opportunities, demonstrated pragmatic compliance (Gunter et al, 2003). This group tended to progress within curriculum related roles which allowed them to retain some focus on students alongside managerialist priorities. Some such as Lily and Sheila admitted some concerns about their managerialist approaches but they all accepted that it was a price they were prepared to pay for advancement to leadership. None of the participants' responses aligned to the typologies of 'strategic compliance' (Gleeson and Shain, 1999 p482) or 'unwilling compliance' (p479). This was unsurprising as these typologies comprised managers who abandoned ambition for career progression in the face of marketisation. Participants' experiences within the managerialist culture in the incumbency phase of their leadership are discussed later in the chapter and its impact on future ambitions is revealed in the divestiture phase.

5.4.2 Summarising the discussion of findings relating to the third research question

The overall profile of the FE workforce (Lifelong Learning UK, 2009b)

reveals a steady increase in female managers after incorporation, and the

postal questionnaire demonstrates the range of leadership posts held by

women in West Midlands colleges (Chapter Four, Figure 5, page 127).

Despite advances within middle management, women remain under-

represented in senior leadership posts and amongst principals (Women's

Leadership Network, 2009, 2012), and BME women significantly so

(Network for Black Professionals, 2011). Participants developed their FE

careers in this context.

5.5 RESEARCH QUESTION 4: HOW DO THE PARTICIPANTS REPORT THEIR EXPERIENCES OF LEADERSHIP WITHIN THE ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE WITHIN FE, AND HOW DO THESE EXPERIENCES RELATE TO ACADEMIC THEORIES OF LEADERSHIP?

All participants enacted leadership within the post incorporation managerialist

and marketised environment (Ainley and Bailey, 1997). This research question

explores their understandings of and experiences as leaders, their leadership

approaches and styles, and their attitudes towards leadership development.

5.5.1 Discussing and comparing participants' experiences as leaders with the literature

The literature review in Chapter Two describes how incorporation moved

college culture towards managerialism as marketisation took hold (Ainley and

Bailey, 1997; Randle and Brady, 1997; Simkins, 2000). College leaders had

to oversee major new areas of responsibility including financial control,

strategic planning, human resource and estates management alongside their traditional role of curriculum planning (Ainley and Bailey, 1997; Lumby, 2003). A new cohort of leaders who understood the business imperative and who were willing to implement the radical changes which incorporation imposed took control of colleges (Ainley and Bailey, 1997). Older participants acknowledged that their approach to leadership changed in the face of the managerialist imperative, with Rachael needing to force the pace of change. Participants who entered FE after incorporation found managerialism already embedded.

The literature posits that relationships between senior leaders and governors favoured masculinist ways of working, and when governors with business experience were recruited, newly politicised relationships between leaders and governors ensued (Withers, 2000). This changed dynamic, together with the fact that the majority of governors were white and male (Frearson, 2003; Ofsted, 2005; Network for Black Professionals, 2008; Lifelong Learning UK, 2008b; Women's Leadership Network, 2013), and the important fact that governors appoint senior postholders, served as further barriers to women's progression to leadership. The literature review highlighted little interest by FE national regulating bodies in investigating the gender or race/ethnic composition of governing bodies. The narratives revealed that several participants' relationships with governors were problematic. Rachael's difficult relationship with the misogynist chair of governors highlights antipathy towards women leaders. Sally's account of the governors' sexism displayed during her interview for a senior post

further evidences the embedded male leadership orthodoxy which operated to exclude women.

Relationships between all but one of the participants and their mainly white male governors were at best uneasy and at worst antagonistic and often compounded an already difficult working environment. Bryony, Joanna, Julie, Lily, Maureen and Sheila all described their circumspect approach in dealing with governors because of their attitudes and powers, whilst Elizabeth and Sally described encounters which left them battered and disillusioned. Kathryn was the only participant who spoke wholly positively about her relationship with governors. These findings highlight the need for much more critical scrutiny of governing bodies and a greater focus on governor training which challenges such attitudes and practices if women's legitimate aspirations for greater participation in college leadership are to be achieved.

5.5.2 Discussing and comparing leadership approaches and styles with the literature

Participants held positions where leadership was distributed amongst members of senior management teams which acted as 'collaborative decision making forums' (Gronn, 2000 p332), with each member providing leadership for different aspects of the college strategic plan. These strategic plans, agreed by governors and funding bodies, imposed a structure which restricted agency and provided 'a means to an end whose purpose is organisational' (Hartley, 2010 p281), giving rise to a technical rationalist leadership perspective (Ogawa and Bossert, 1995). Those participants who willingly embraced marketisation also embraced

managerialist approaches to leadership and saluted the emphasis on meeting targets and ensuring accountability and value for money. When Bryony described herself as 'visionary' this was in the context of the business

model. Kathryn found a unity between personal and institutional philosophies.

Accounts of leadership reflected pressure to conform to participants' understandings of socially constructed normative masculinist models of leadership (Randle and Brady, 1997; Kerfoot and Whitehead, 1998; Mavin and Bryans, 2002). Joanna had clearly absorbed a socially constructed view of gender norms when she linked her personal appearance with pressure to be tough (Butler, 1990). Barbara's account demonstrated that she conceptualised a structuralist leadership model, assuming a functional orthodoxy against which she measured her approaches (Fullan, 2001; Northouse, 2001). However participants did not advocate alternative models of leadership. Alice and Georgina acknowledged a hardening of their leadership style in the light of their acceptance of managerialism. Lily appointed bureaucrats despite acknowledging their lack of creativity. Georgina and Julie were willing to be authoritative to impose targets despite a declared preference to be democratic.

Those participants who took a pragmatic approach in responding to managerialism (Gunter et al, 2003) described themselves as democratic leaders although this also often disguised an underlying directive stance.

Thus Sheila ensured that when she was working with staff towards reaching what she described as a democratic decision, she inserted managerial constraints into decision making. Helen apparently took care to listen to the views of others but actually made the decisions herself. Maureen was consultative and democratic except when dealing with performance management issues. Rachael altered her preferred consultative style to 'pace setting' to increase the speed of change. Sally preferred persuasion and humour but was willing to confront if required. There was a noticeable tendency amongst this cohort to apologise for their departure from a democratic style because they valued inclusivity when enacting leadership (Rayner, 2009). Yet despite preferring democratic leadership at an ideological level, they were willing to be directive in order to achieve the managerialist imperatives to which they were also committed. Only Margaret claimed to be democratic and consultative at all times but this worked against her because her efforts to reach consensus were seen by others as a weakness. When appointing new managers, Lily acknowledged her preference for selecting like-minded female candidates, demonstrating the approach to diversity identified by Morrison et al (2006).

Participants all described a contextual approach to leadership, adapting their style according to the people with whom they were dealing and the issues faced. This contextual approach to leadership is partly consistent with Richmon and Allison's (2003) integrated typology of leadership which combines trait, behaviour, style and situational circumstances. However, the failure of Richmon and Allison's (2003) typology to foreground either

race/ethnicity or gender demonstrates that their typology is not fully contextual because these important contextual issues are omitted. This further highlights the need to develop leadership discourses and models which embrace diversity.

Participants who encountered problems as leaders were self-critical. Despite sexism within her team, Bryony felt she failed as a leader. Although isolated by gender, Lily described herself as 'too pushy' and 'controlling', whilst Maureen blamed her initial 'tentative' approach which allowed her sexist male colleague to undermine her. These various responses suggest that participants were comparing themselves adversely against normative masculinist leadership orthodoxy. The findings demonstrate how a more inclusive typology which embraces gender and race/ethnic difference might help to create wider spaces within which women could develop and enact leadership within FE.

5.5.3 Discussion of attitudes to and experiences of leadership training

Rachael valued leadership training because it provided a support network, but overall these participants showed little enthusiasm for the conceptualisation of or participation in FE national leadership training. This aligns to Morrison et al's (2006) findings that college leaders demonstrate little engagement with leadership training. The majority of participants supported Gronn's (1996) and Bush's (2009) stance that skills based training programmes are not important in developing successful leadership.

No participant had undertaken the FE national leadership training programme at the time of being interviewed, and only Christine, Joanna and Kathryn showed any interest in it.

In putting the case for a more inclusive approach to FE leadership the Commission for Black Staff in Further Education (2002) called for targeted training for BME practitioners. The prevailing view amongst BME participants was that such targeted training can assist them to deal with the challenges and barriers they face. Kathryn's initial opposition changed through her increased awareness of the racism experienced by many BME staff in FE. Barbara, Georgina, Kathryn and Margaret had all undertaken BLI training. Although Margaret critiqued the FE sector because of failure to offer progression opportunities, 25 out of 29 respondents (of whom 17 were women) in a survey of BLI trainees assessed that the training 'made a "great" or "positive" contribution to career change' (Network for Black Managers, 2005d p3). The risk is that if aspiring BME leaders undertake separate leadership development outside national leadership programmes, their voices remain marginalised or excluded. Margaret experienced this, and so too did a group of BME managers undertaking targeted training whose expectations of support from white managers were dashed by lack of recognition and exclusion from progression opportunities (Mackay and Etienne, 2006). Davidson (1997) and Mirza (1998) highlight the absence of BME women's voices within leadership discourses, but participants' accounts demonstrate how white masculinist norms are embedded in FE

leadership and illustrate Lumby and Coleman's (2007) concerns that a normative approach counters the embedding of diversity into leadership.

5.5.4 Summing up the discussion relating to the fourth research question

Participants' assessment of their leadership experiences in FE were mixed. Half assessed that taken as a whole their experiences were positive. Kathryn and Sheila were the most positive, with Kathryn reporting her 'ability to make a difference' and Sheila asserting that she 'thrives on challenge'. Barbara, Christine, Georgina, Joanna, Julie and Rachael also assessed their overall experiences as positive, although this cohort considered that the barriers and challenges at times detracted from this. The remaining half assessed their overall experiences of leadership in FE more negatively and this shaped their decisions in the divestiture phase. Elizabeth and Margaret singled out racism, whilst sexist responses from male governors, principals and staff, together with the masculinist organisational culture, were significant barriers which shaped the future ambitions of Alice, Bryony, Helen, Lily, Maureen and Sally.

Participants claimed to embrace a democratic style of leadership. However, in relating participants' accounts to academic theories of leadership, it was clear that most had absorbed masculinist leadership orthodoxy. Those participants who willingly embraced marketisation also tended to adopt masculinist approaches to leadership. Those who were pragmatic in accepting the pressures of the market favoured a democratic approach but they also responded to pressure to be authoritarian.

The findings revealed little support for FE national leadership training. This training takes no account of the different insights, understandings and contributions which women from all backgrounds can bring to leadership, nor of the barriers and challenges they face. The findings revealed support for separate training for BME leaders. However, if white and BME women are to make full contribution to FE leadership, more flexible and inclusive leadership models which can accommodate diverse styles and approaches are needed. Recognising this, the Network for Black Professionals and the Women's Leadership Network held a joint conference in 2010 focusing on under-representation in college leadership (Network for Black Professionals, 2010). Whilst FE national leadership training is structured around a one-size-fits-all model, it will continue to marginalise those who reject white masculinist leadership orthodoxy and may further marginalise both white and BME women. The next section discusses the consequences of their leadership experiences for participants in this study.

5.6 RESEARCH QUESTION 5: WHAT WERE THE CONSEQUENCES FOR PARTICIPANTS OF THEIR EXPERIENCE OF AND ENGAGEMENT WITH THE ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE WITHIN FE?

The divestiture phase of Gronn and Ribbins' (1996) career development framework has been adapted to relate to participants' future career aims, focusing in particular on whether they intended to remain in FE and if not, their reasons for wanting to leave.

5.6.1 Discussing and comparing findings relating to the impact of experiences on career aims in the divestiture phase with the literature

Women formed a very small proportion of college principals at incorporation (Wild, 1994) and despite some increase, women remain under-represented within the senior leadership cohort (Lifelong Learning UK, 2011b; Women's Leadership Network, 2012). Despite this under-representation, all participants had successfully progressed to hold senior leadership roles from which further progression could lead to principalship. However, as a result of their experiences in the accession and incumbency phases, only five of the sixteen participants aspired to become principals by the divestiture phase. These five attributed their self-belief as an important factor in their ability to overcome the barriers which they had encountered. This was resonant of the white and BME women who became head teachers (Hall, 1996; McKenley and Gordon, 2002). Whilst Barbara and Kathryn had always been driven by self-belief, Christine developed self-belief as a result of personal development training and also, like Joanna and Julie, partly as a result of encouragement by the principals in their colleges. This supports Browne-Ferrigno's (2003) findings of the value of support from existing leaders. The importance of self-belief adds to what is known about factors which sustain women's leadership in FE and also links

to recent school based literature which also highlights the importance of self-belief (Rhodes, 2012).

The remaining eleven participants' negative experiences in the accession and incumbency phases shaped their future career plans in the divestiture phase. Although Gronn (1999a) posited that the key barriers faced by women related to family responsibilities and lack of ambition rather than institutional barriers, the findings in this study did not accord with that. Rather, structural barriers were the key factors influencing their decisions to abandon ambition for further progression.   A combination of the sexist and in some cases racist attitudes towards them, isolation and disillusionment with the masculinist and managerialist culture caused them to abandon ambitions for further progression within FE and some lost self-belief. These findings are variously reflected in the literature. Managerialism, and the resulting macho management style which dominated FE, were identified as barriers to progression for some women (Kerfoot and Whitehead, 1998; Leonard, 1998; Gleeson and Shain, 1999; Cole, 2000; Shain, 2000; Gleeson and Knights, 2008). Further, sexism and racism have been highlighted within the literature as key barriers to women's career progression (Hall, 1996; Davidson, 1997; Deem et al, 2000; Mackay and Etienne, 2006; Sargeant, 2007; Fuller, 2009). Importantly, three of the five BME participants abandoned their ambitions to progress within FE, reflecting findings of high 'attrition rates' (Network for Black Managers, 2005c p1) amongst BME managers who reported disillusionment caused by barriers as the most common reason for leaving the sector. Unlike some of

their white counterparts, these BME participants maintained self-belief and were ambitious to progress their careers outside FE. This raises interesting questions about how self-belief is sustained.

5.6.2 Summarising discussion relating to the fifth research question

Despite the fact that women form the majority of college workforces, they remain under-represented within senior leadership teams and as principals (Lifelong Learning UK, 2011b; Women's Leadership Network, 2012). The findings have highlighted and foregrounded reasons why some of these participants, who formed part of the cohort of potential principals, withdrew from aspiring to lead colleges. At the start of the incumbency phase all participants were ambitious to progress further within FE.   As a consequence of their experiences only five retained their ambition to progress towards principalship. The majority abandoned ambition for further career development in FE as a result of a range of mainly structural barriers which impeded their progression. Of those who decided to leave the sector to seek alternative opportunities, some still felt positive and maintained self-belief. Others expressed disillusionment with the FE sector. Some lost self-belief and abandoned any desire either to progress or to seek alternative work.

5.7 THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE OVERALL AIMS OF THE RESEARCH HAVE BEEN MET

The overarching aim of this research was to promote a more inclusive leadership discourse (Blackmore, 2010) which highlights and foregrounds

the experiences of white and BME women leaders within FE. Much of the research into women's leadership experiences considers either white (Hall, 1996; Aveling, 2002; Coleman, 2002) or BME (Davidson, 1997; Maylor, 2009; Phoenix, 2009) women separately, creating a binary whereby within leadership discourses (Mavin and Bryans, 2002). I sought to challenge this binary and to bring together the voices of white and BME women within an inclusive discourse within which all their voices could be heard. Instead of 'us' and 'them' I wanted 'we'.

The key research problem lies in the fact that white and BME women are under-represented amongst FE senior leaders and principals in a context where women are over-represented within both the workforce and the student body (Lifelong Learning UK, 2009b; Network for Black Professionals, 2011; Women's Leadership Network, 2012). The literature review detailed structural changes in the FE sector as a result of incorporation in 1993. This led to a managerialist and marketised culture and climate underpinned by significant changes in governance (Ainley and Bailey, 1997; Randle and Brady, 1997). The literature and the findings demonstrated how the resulting masculinist leadership orthodoxy marginalised or excluded women (Kerfoot and Whitehead, 1998; Shain, 2000).

This literature depicted the context within which participants' experiences of leadership have been explored and interpreted and highlighted how little is known about the reasons underpinning women's choice of career in FE.

Understandings of career and models of women's career trajectories (Evetts, 1990; Gronn, 1999a; Aveling 2002) have been shown to lack inclusivity. The findings have value both in informing further studies around women's career choices and also in contributing to debates around the under-representation of both white and BME women within FE leadership.

The semi-structured interviews produced narratives which provided a rich resource in support of the research aims. My adaptation of the heuristic framework developed by Gronn and Ribbins (1996) which focuses on stages of career development enabled me to identify factors which promoted or inhibited career development at different phases within participants' FE careers. There was a high level of consistency in the emic accounts provided by participants identifying challenges and barriers and the value of various kinds of support. Self-belief emerged as an important factor in sustaining ambition, and loss of self-belief underpinned the abandonment of ambition.

National FE leadership training and the BLI have been highlighted as creating a binary in relation to race/ethnicity. Normative leadership models and typologies, whilst claiming to be comprehensive or integrated (Richmon and Allison, 2003) have been critiqued because they tend to overlook gender and/or race/ethnicity (Kohli, 2009). This detracts from the development of inclusive leadership discourses which could challenge the white masculinist orthodoxy which characterises FE leadership (Randle and Brady, 1997; Kerfoot and Whitehead, 1998; Shain, 2000; Commission for

Black Staff in Further Education, 2002; Frearson, 2003; Women's

Leadership Network 2009, 2010). Morrison (2006) made the link between

college performance and leadership, commenting that 'a search for a holy

grail to link leadership development to organisational performance is

longstanding, yet issues of diversity are largely side-streamed' (p171). The

final aim was to draw out some wider implications for FE leadership

development which might influence policy makers, practitioners and

researchers and engage them in debates around issues of under-

representation in FE leadership and how leadership in the sector might

become more inclusive.

> The critique which opens up the possibility for emancipatory praxis is
> one which recognises that the way things are perceived to be may, in
> fact, be the way they are being made to appear, so that some existing
> unequal relationships and unjust practices may not be recognised for
> what they are (Grundy, 1993 p171).

The conclusions which can be drawn from this research are considered in

the next chapter.

6.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter draws conclusions from the research, starting by evaluating

the extent to which the theoretical basis and research design succeeded in

meeting the research aims. The next section considers the implications of

the findings, proposing a new more inclusive understanding of barriers

faced by white and BME women in advancing to FE leadership and the

support which sustained them. The chapter then highlights the contribution

to knowledge to which this study makes claim. This includes contribution to

understandings of why women choose careers in FE, and whilst there is no

claim that these findings are generalisable, they exemplify key issues

identified by these participants. Further, the findings contribute to

leadership theorising about transition to leadership by summarising the

responses by women leaders to their experiences as leaders in FE. The

next section offers recommendations for FE leadership policy and practice

in the light of the findings. Then follow suggestions of issues arising from

this study which might form the subject of future research. The chapter

ends with a concluding assessment of the research.

6.1 EVALUATING THE THEORETICAL BASIS OF THE RESEARCH AND RESEARCH DESIGN

The ontological basis underpinning this study, detailed in Chapter Three,

located this research as qualitative with humanistic, critical and

emancipatory aims. Pring's (2000) stance that a theoretical picture can be

built to explain typical behaviour within qualitative research underpinned the analysis and findings. Multiple realities emerge from social settings (Pring, 2000), therefore participants' accounts revealed varied interpretations of their leadership experiences. Illustratively, participants responded differently to marketisation, and Kathryn's experiences of racism differed from those of her BME counterparts. Whilst the findings in an interpretative study cannot be scientifically validated, the themes can be assessed in terms of internal validity and relatability (Denscombe, 2003). The findings demonstrated trustworthiness within and across racial/ethnic boundaries.

The postal questionnaire provided contextual data within which participants' experiences could be interpreted and understood. Semi-structured interviews were successful in collecting career histories, focusing on the heuristic framework of career whilst enabling participants to develop themes emerging from their experiences which could be raised with later participants, following Erben's (1996) 'hermeneutical circle' (p160). This added to the richness and trustworthiness of the data. Illustratively, this led to relationships with governors being included.

In interpreting the narratives and reaching findings, I acknowledge my position as an insider vis-à-vis career and gender but an outsider in relation to the race/ethnicity of BME participants. Bridges (2001) and Fitzgerald (2010) attest to the value of understandings gained through outsider research and their emancipatory potential in giving voice. Guneratnam (2003) posits that 'there are no clear "cause" and "effect" relationships

between racialized research participants and interviewers' (p77) whilst

Warmington (2009) acknowledges that responses given by BME

respondents to white researchers have value.

The decision to conceptualise and conduct multiracial research was justified

by the absence in the literature of an inclusive discourse relating to white

and BME women's experiences as leaders in FE and by participants'

enthusiasm towards a multiracial study. 'I think these stories should be told'

(Alice, a white participant) and 'We all need to write about all these things,

it's really important' (Georgina, a BME participant). The literature review

demonstrated that research tends to focus separately on the experiences of

white women in FE (Wild, 1994; Cole, 2000; Shain, 2000; McTavish and

Miller, 2009), or BME women in business (Davidson, 1997), or BME people

in FE (Commission for Black Staff in Further Education, 2002; Mackay and

Etienne, 2006; Sargeant, 2007). Whilst studies which separate the

experiences of white and BME women have value in giving voice (Hall,

1996; Davidson, 1997), Vleighe (2010) values the conceptualisation of an

inclusive discourse as 'a communising and equalising experience' (p161).

FE leadership is under the dual pressures of under-representation of

women from all backgrounds together with a shortage of aspiring principals

(DfES and Centre for Excellence in Leadership, 2003; Women's Leadership

Network, 2009, 2010, 2012; Lifelong Learning UK, 2011b). However,

debates around diversity in leadership should not be given prominence

merely as a strategy to recruit to hard-to-fill vacancies. White and BME

women do not want to engage with leadership as tokens 'under the gaze of

others through the ambiguous lens of gender or race' (Blackmore, 2006 p191). Importantly, 'presence and voice is not enough unless there is also the possibility of a more inclusive process of democratic deliberation that enables agency and a capacity to influence decisions' (Blackmore, 2006 p191). Although Blackmore (2006) was referring to school leadership, her argument supports the underlying conceptualisation of this study. 'Think manager, think male needs to be translated into think leader, think the best person: male or female' (Collins and Singh, 2006, p27). I would add, explicitly, think also BME and white, because 'white individuals must learn to dance…to rhythms that may at first sound jarring and unfamiliar' (Raible and Irizarry, 2007 p178).

6.2 IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

The implications of the findings will next be discussed in relation to the themes of career embedded in the research questions and explored in the literature review. These sections expose the separate discourses relating to white and BME women's experiences within the literature before offering understandings of barriers faced by women from all backgrounds as they progress towards leadership in FE, together with the sources of support which sustained them, based on findings from this study.

6.2.1 FE as a career choice for women

There were no discernible patterns of influences from family backgrounds or schools emerging as drivers towards participants' choices of careers in FE, as summarised in Table 11 in Chapter Four. The literature review revealed

that very little is known about why women choose FE as a career. Despite

multifaceted routes into FE, participants were united in the accession phase

through common ambition towards leadership in a sector where women

from all backgrounds remain under-represented in senior leadership

(Network for Black Professionals, 2010; Women's Leadership Network,

2012). Whilst Gronn (1999a) and Aveling (2002) give priority to agency as

key to women's under-representation in leadership, linked to family

responsibilities, Evetts (1990) proposed a typology within which women's

careers were only temporarily curtailed by family responsibilities. This was

helpful in highlighting that family responsibilities do not act as an overriding

constraint to women's agency (Evetts, 1990), but none of this literature

related to women in FE. All but two participants were parents and only one

chose not to have children because she believed that children would restrict

her agency. The findings revealed that family responsibilities underpinned

some participants' choice of career in FE because flexibility in the sector

enabled them to combine family and career, so this duality did not constrain

the ambition of either white or BME participants. Thus the findings differed

from literature which attributes women's under-representation mainly to

their prioritisation of family responsibilities over career (Gronn, 1999a;

Aveling, 2002). Further, Evetts (1990), Gronn (1999a) and Aveling (2002)

focused narrowly on the barrier of family responsibilities rather than the

plethora of barriers faced by women, and also failed to take account of the

impact of race/ethnicity in their analyses of women's career trajectories.

The findings from this study seek to embed diversity into this discourse.

Gronn and Ribbin's (1996) heuristic career framework proved useful in offering a structure within which to analyse participants' careers, although it did not offer an exact fit because most had not experienced the smooth linear career development on which the model is based. Only two participants began their working lives in FE with no subsequent changes. The findings add to what is known about women's choice of FE as a career. They demonstrate that participants' choice of a career in FE was sometimes planned, sometimes pragmatic because the sector's flexibility enabled them to balance family and work, sometimes based on recommendation and sometimes quite random. Hall's (1996) findings relating to white women's choice of school careers were not replicated as participants did not seek to reproduce their schools' cultures and values. Further, whilst many participants were teachers who progressed to leadership in academic areas, others retained identities developed outside educational settings in business areas such as finance and human resources. However, despite varied reasons for entry to FE, all participants aspired to leadership in the accession phase and all reported encountering barriers.

6.2.2 Barriers to career progression

The findings demonstrate that, whilst some participants' agency was temporarily constrained by family responsibilities (Evetts, 1990), most barriers faced were structural. Despite these, all participants had successfully progressed to senior leadership. They had transformed their 'mind-set shift' (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003 p488) and developed role identities

as leaders in the face of barriers such as masculinist leadership orthodoxy which isolated them, sexism and, for BME participants, racism.

6.2.2.1 Barriers to women's progression to FE leadership in the literature

Studies within FE tend to explore white and BME experiences separately. Barriers to white women's progression to leadership identified within the literature (Wild, 1994; Cole, 2000; Shain, 2000; McTavish and Miller, 2009), include family commitments, macho management leadership, sexism, lack of role models and mentors, and difficulties with role identity transformation. It is not possible to demonstrate the proportion of women leaders who identified these barriers.

There is a separate literature identifying barriers to BME people's progression to FE leadership which is not gender specific (Commission for Black Staff in Further Education, 2002; Mackay and Etienne, 2006; Sargeant, 2007), whilst Davidson (1997) maps barriers faced by aspiring BME women managers in business. These include racism, sexism, low aspirations, lack of role models and lack of mentors. It is not possible to demonstrate the proportion of BME women identifying each of these barriers.

6.2.2.2 An inclusive understanding of barriers to women's leadership in FE

The separation of white and BME women's experiences in the literature

demonstrates the absence of inclusive debates around women's leadership.

Findings reveal that isolation, reported by eight participants, and sexism,

reported by seven participants, comprised the two biggest barriers identified

in this study. Macho management was identified as a barrier by six

participants, whilst four reported stereo-typing. Two participants reported

short-term problems with role identity transformation to management.

Although racism is specific to BME women, its direct impact was reported

by four BME participants whilst the fifth acknowledged racist practices.

Their accounts revealed that the racism to which witnesses to the

Commission for Black Staff in Further Education (2002) gave testimony still

prevailed in the professional lives of these BME women leaders. These

findings add to the literature by presenting a new inclusive discourse within

which women's experiences as leaders in FE can be contextualised and

understood.

Participants' accounts further revealed the stages in their careers when they

encountered these various barriers, exemplifying their leadership

experiences, as shown in Table 16.

Table 16: Barriers identified by participants as inhibiting career development
at different phases of career in FE

Career phase	Older white participants	BME participants	Younger white participants
Accession phase	• Isolation • Sexism • Stereotyping • Macho management	• Isolation • Racism • Sexism	• Sexism • Macho management
Incumbency phase	• Isolation • Sexism	• Isolation • Racism	• Sexism • Macho

	• Stereotyping • Macho management	• Stereotyping	management • Role identity transformation
Divestiture phase	• Managerialism • Long hours culture	• Isolation • Racism	• Sexism • Macho management

It is too simplistic to conclude that women experience particular barriers (other than racism) or sources of support based solely on their gender or race/ethnicity. Nor did the findings suggest that any one barrier, however challenging, shaped participants' responses. However, awareness of the impact of barriers at different career stages can contribute to understandings around under-representation and might link to future talent management and leadership development strategies in the FE sector.

6.2.3 Sources of support promoting career progression

Alongside barriers, participants identified sources of support which promoted their progression towards leadership. The literature tends to focus on either white women (Hall, 1996) or BME women (Davidson, 1997) or be mixed gender (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003) and is not specific to FE. The findings contribute to knowledge by demonstrating the support available to these participants at different stages of career, as summarised in Table 17, and expose the relative absence of college-based support for some participants. Notably, white participants received support from some white male and/or female colleagues whereas BME participants experienced some support from some white women colleagues but were largely bereft of support from the majority cohort of white male leaders. Research has revealed the importance of support from existing leaders in promoting

progression to principalship (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). The Commission for

Black Staff in Further Education (2002) recommended that 'college

leadership should ensure that Black staff are supported through the

establishment of focus groups and the development of mentoring schemes'

(p85). These BME participants had not experienced these in their colleges.

Table 17: Sources of support identified by participants as promoting career
development at different phases of career in FE

Career phase	Older white participants	BME participants	Younger white participants
Accession phase	• Self-belief • Support from some white male colleagues • Some support from white female colleagues • Family and friendship networks	• Self-belief • Support from some white female colleagues but very little support from white male colleagues • Family and friendship networks	• Self-belief • Support from white female colleagues • Support from white male colleagues • Family and friendship networks
Incumbency phase	• Some maintained self-belief and some lost self-belief • White male and female colleagues • Family and friends • Networks	• Self-belief maintained even when deciding to leave FE • Support from some white female colleagues • Family and friends • Networks	• Some maintained self-belief and some lost self-belief • White female colleagues • White male colleagues • Family and friends
Divestiture phase	• Some maintained self-belief and some lost self-belief	• Self-belief • Support from principal and governors at one college	• Some maintained self-belief and some lost self-belief

6.2.3.1 Self-belief

An emergent finding revealed the importance of self-belief in the accession

and incumbency phases of these participants' careers. Some participants'

self-belief was underpinned by external influences whilst others had innate self-belief, but all participants enjoyed high self-belief on accession. Experiences during the accession and incumbency phases led some white participants to lose self-belief, but no BME participant reported such loss. Loss of self-belief engendered self-critical approaches and negative self-perceptions as leaders, which were key factors which destroyed ambition to progress to principalship. These findings contribute to emerging literature highlighting the importance of nurturing self-belief within school talent management strategies (Rhodes, 2012).

6.2.3.2 Talent management

The research questions successfully foregrounded participants' experiences in each career phase, and narratives revealed the impact of barriers and support at these different phases. These participants showed little interest in national leadership training. BME participants viewed BLI programmes positively but assessed that their separateness limited their effectiveness. These divisions highlight the need to embed diversity into mainstream FE talent management and leadership development strategies.

6.3 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

The contribution to knowledge to which this study makes claim is next delineated. The size of the study precludes any claims that the findings are generalisable, but the findings may resonate with other women leaders in FE and with the findings of other studies.

6.3.1 Women's career choices and progression towards FE leadership

The literature review in Chapter Two revealed the absence of research relating to women's choice of career in FE. Evetts' (1990) typology of primary school teachers revealed the differing priorities which women place on career at different times. Participants could be located as transients within this typology, but the typology did not address barriers other than family responsibilities. Hall (1996) revealed that white women head teachers' career aims were strongly influenced by their desire to teach their subjects and to replicate the ethos of their schooling within their own careers. The findings in this study differed, revealing that some participants had no experience of working in educational settings prior to their accession to leadership in FE and none sought to replicate the ethos of their schools. The study makes a contribution to knowledge by revealing reasons for white and BME participants' choice of careers in FE. Five participants chose careers in FE as progression from previous positions outside the sector. Four chose FE careers based on recommendations from friends who were already working in the sector. Three participants entered FE because it afforded them flexibility which enabled them to combine work and family responsibilities. Two chose FE careers because they wanted to teach adults rather than school children, and two began working as part time FE teachers, progressed to full time posts and decided to remain in FE to pursue their careers.

6.3.2 Life stories as a contribution to leadership discourses

Chapter Three posits that leaders' life stories form a valuable resource for leaders and aspiring leaders (Goodson, 1991, 2006; Day and Bakioglu, 1996; Danzig, 1999; Ribbins, 2003), who could extend understandings hermeneutically by adding their own interpretations to those offered by the findings. This study contributes to leadership discourses by embracing both racial/ethnic background and gender, because 'what is missing in policy and mainstream educational administration literature is a transformative discourse to diversify management and leadership' (Blackmore, 2006 p192). Further, this study may help white leaders better understand how racism impacts on the lives of BME people (Kohli, 2009; Warmington, 2009) and support BME leaders in dealing with racism (Phoenix, 2009; Hughes and Giles, 2010).

6.3.3 Summary of women's responses to their experiences as leaders in FE

A study relating to BME school teachers' progress through career stages revealed a model of responses (Coleman and Campbell-Stephens, 2010). Some progressed quickly within a fast track model whilst others struggled to achieve promotion within a hard won acquisition model (Coleman and Campbell-Stephens, 2010). Others stalled before they progressed to leadership whilst others ceased to pursue further progression and accepted the status quo (Coleman and Campbell-Stephens, 2010). Analysis of the data within this research study also supports a summary, albeit with some different responses from the summary of responses found by Coleman and Campbell-Stephens (2010). The summary arising from this study brings together the responses of white and BME women to their experiences as

leaders in FE within an inclusive leadership discourse. The sample size precludes any claim that this summary of responses applies to all women leaders in FE, and it is designed only to exemplify key factors which shaped participants' responses and which might resonate with other women leaders and with other research findings. Importantly, participants' responses can be located within this summary at different career phases, linked to the extent to which progression is supported or constrained. The summary highlights the impact in each career phase of the combination of factors supporting progression and barriers restricting progression, and reveals that the barriers caused a high proportion to abandon ambition by the divestiture phase. This further compounded women's under-representation amongst the pool of aspiring college principals.

The implications of this new summary of responses are multifaceted. For researchers, it adds to the model of responses developed by Coleman and Campbell-Stephens, 2010, which related only to BME teachers, and highlights the need to explore the emerging summary further. In terms of leadership theory, it extends Browne-Ferrigno's (2003) theoretical understandings of transition to leadership by highlighting how some white and BME women's 'purposeful engagement' (p491) with progression towards principalship in FE has been supported or disrupted at different phases of career. This opens up the possibility of advancing theorising by relating barriers and support at different phases of career to existing models of transition to leadership, thereby modifying or extending leadership theory. Policy makers seeking to embed diversity within the talent pool from which

college leaders are selected could design interventions to support women at key stages of career, sustaining self-belief and ambition and enhancing 'purposeful engagement' (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003 p491) towards principalship. This could form part of wider talent management and leadership development strategies within FE. For principals and governors seeking to increase diversity within their own leadership teams, the summary might promote interest in developing in-house strategies to support aspiring women leaders and it may also assist practitioners further to develop understandings of their own experiences. The summary highlights four types of responses which are next delineated.

Careerists

A careerist actively seeks out opportunities for advancement within FE and progresses from post to post in the accession phase. She prioritises her career and her agency is not constrained despite family responsibilities. Careerists' self-belief enables them to overcome or at the very least be undeterred by barriers and they successfully develop identities as leaders. A careerist would have a career plan, prioritising steps to support progression, remaining focused on her ambitions. She accepts managerialism either because it fits with her personal ideology or pragmatically because it represents the dominant culture within FE. Careerists progress to senior leadership and aspire to principalship in the divestiture phase.

Opportunists

An opportunist does not seek out career advancement as a primary planned goal but is personally ambitious and seizes opportunities. Opportunists adopt the practice of doing what is presently expedient as opposed to adherence to plans. An opportunist would not place career at the centre of her priorities, but career advancement would be part of her overall expectations notwithstanding other priorities. Thus family commitments may temporarily constrain her agency, but if an opportunity arose which fitted in with these commitments, she would pursue that advancement. Opportunists take advantage of available sources of support, maintain self-belief and successfully transform their identities to leaders. Like their careerist counterparts, opportunists embrace managerialism for pragmatic if not for ideological reasons. In the incumbency phase, they retain ambition to progress in FE, but in the divestiture phase this does not necessarily equate with becoming a college principal and they may look for opportunities elsewhere.

Statics

Statics are ambitious for progression towards FE senior leadership in the accession phase but lose this ambition and abandon aims for further advancement, finding security in that stasis. Statics lacks confidence to leave FE for alternative careers. A woman loses self-belief and becomes static as a result of barriers encountered in the accession and/or incumbency phases. Her agency is curtailed and she can no longer envisage the necessary role identity transformation to become a principal. Although they embraced managerialism or at least accepted it in the

accession and incumbency phases, by the divestiture stage statics assess that macho management constituted a key barrier to their achievement of previous ambitions. There is resonance here between the statics and those who accepted the status quo within Coleman and Campbell-Stephens' (2010) model of responses.

Disillusioned

Those who are disillusioned are successful women who abandon their ambition for further progression within FE by the divestiture phase, wanting to loosen or sever their ties with the sector. The disillusioned set out with high ambitions but their careers were arrested by barriers in the accession and/or incumbency phase. They become disenchanted with FE and seek a change in their job roles and in organisation culture. Whatever their earlier views of FE, in the divestiture stage they are critical of the structural barriers they have encountered including the masculinist managerialist ethos and, for BME participants, the racism.   Unlike the statics, disillusioned women maintain high self-belief, confident that in other settings they can successfully progress their careers.

The summary of responses locates the experiences of white and BME women leaders in FE within an inclusive discourse. It adds to Gleeson and Shain's (1999) typology because that was limited to FE middle managers, related only to responses to incorporation and took no account of gender or race/ethnicity. This new summary foregrounds white and BME women leaders' responses to a wide range of barriers and support, revealing that

many were differently located at different phases of their careers. This

contributes to knowledge about women's responses to their experiences in

FE, linked to stages in career, although further work is needed to explore

the intersectionality of gender and race/ethnicity vis-à-vis BME women

leaders in FE. Table 18 locates participants within this summary of

responses.

Table 18: Locating participants within the summary of responses to leadership experiences
(W denotes white participant and BME denotes black or minority ethnic participant)

Career phase	Careerist	Opportunist	Statics	Disillusioned
Formation phase	Alice (W) Bryony (W) Julie (W) Margaret (BME) Maureen (W) Rachael (W) Sally (W) Sheila (W)	Barbara (BME) Christine (W) Georgina (BME) Helen (W)	Joanna (W) Kathryn (BME) Lily (W)	Elizabeth (BME)
Accession phase	Alice (W) Barbara (BME) Bryony (W) Elizabeth (BME) Joanna (W) Julie (W) Rachael (W)	Christine (W) Georgina (BME) Helen (W) Kathryn (BME) Lily (W) Margaret (BME) Maureen (W) Sally (W) Sheila (W)		
Incumbency phase	Barbara (BME) Joanna (W) Julie (W) Kathryn (BME) Rachael (W)	Christine (W) Georgina (BME) Sheila (W)	Alice (W) Bryony (W) Lily (W) Maureen (W) Sally (W)	Elizabeth (BME) Helen (W) Margaret (BME)
Divestiture phase	Barbara (BME) Christine (W) Julie (W) Kathryn (BME)	Georgina (BME) Joanna (W) Sheila (W) Rachael (W)	Alice (W) Lily (W) Maureen (W) Sally (W)	Bryony (W) Elizabeth (BME) Helen (W) Margaret

				(BME)

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

6.4.1 Peer support

The findings demonstrate that the majority of barriers encountered by women leaders in FE are common for both white and BME women, although BME women face the additional barrier of racism. Although many participants faced isolation, findings reveal that white participants benefited more from support in the workplace than their BME counterparts and this reduced isolation and promoted self-belief. This could suggest that interventions offering workplace support may help to sustain the ambitions of both white and BME women, thereby reducing the attrition rate amongst this under-represented cohort within college senior leadership. Further, interracial support confers additional benefits because 'the experience of having meaningful interactions with racial others has the potential to serve as a powerful counter-narrative to the negative perceptions regarding people of colour held by some white teachers' (Raible and Irizarry, 2007 p193).

6.4.2 FE leadership training

National leadership training, which presents a preferred leadership orthodoxy based on a business model, was introduced in 2003 (DfES and Centre for Excellence in Leadership, 2003). BLI training for aspiring BME leaders runs separately. This demonstrates the absence of an inclusive approach to leadership development in FE, despite an increasing attrition rate amongst BME managers (Network for Black Managers, 2005c) and a

reducing applicant pool.   In 2008, national leadership training became the

responsibility of LSIS who planned a re-launch (Learning and Skills

Improvement Service, 2012). The findings demonstrate that managerialist

leadership orthodoxy, regarded by many as masculinist (Blackmore, 1993;

Wild, 1994; Kerfoot and Whitehead, 1998; Leonard, 1998; Cole, 2000; Reay

and Ball, 2000) can act as a barrier to women's leadership. The equation of

masculinity with power is at the heart of literature relating to institutional

masculinity (Clark, 1999; Kerfoot, 1999; Maile, 1999; Connell, 2002).

Leadership development offers opportunities for creating new discourses

which nurture leaders from diverse backgrounds and legitimates their

voices within 'the discourses of power' (Pillay, 2006 p598). The education

workforce should be populated 'with people who bring diverse world views

and discursive fields of reference, including those that expose, challenge

and deconstruct racism rather than tacitly accepting it' (Sleeter, 1993 p168).

Jameson (2008) argues that communities of practice where experiences

are shared have more value than training programmes in leadership

development.   FE policy makers may wish to consider an approach to

leadership development which conceptualises a leadership heterodoxy

which might encourage more white and BME women to participate within

supportive communities of practice.

6.4.3 Talent management

Some local authorities have adopted talent management strategies across

their schools because, as with FE, there is a shortage of aspiring leaders

(Rhodes and Brundrett, 2012). The schools model is not readily

transferable to FE because responsibility for appointing principals and

senior postholders lies independently with each college's governing body and, unlike many schools, there is no central employer. Any FE talent management strategy would need to take account of the different patterns between women's and men's careers (Evetts, 1990; Gronn, 1999b; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003) and between white and BME people's careers (Davidson, 1997). It could also include governor training to embed diversity across all aspects of FE leadership, because this study exposes issues relating to the composition, training and attitudes of some governors. As the summary of responses to leadership experiences highlights changes in participants' leadership ambitions at different phases of career, linked to the inter-relationship between barriers and support, these findings could enable talent management strategies to offer timely interventions to preserve leadership ambition. This could help improve both gender and racial/ethnic representation within college leadership.

6.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

6.5.1 FE as a career choice for women

The literature review revealed that, although women form the majority of the FE workforce (Lifelong Learning UK, 2008a, 2008b), little is known about factors underpinning their choice of FE as a career. Participants' reasons for choosing a career in FE did not replicate factors underpinning the career choices of white women school heads (Hall, 1996). Early career choices may restrict future opportunities, contributing to a further cycle of under-representation (Coleman, 2002; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). Further research is needed to identify factors underpinning FE as a career choice for white

and BME women if issues of gender under-representation in leadership are to be better understood. Such research could include both women who have progressed to leadership and also those who similarly aspire but have not achieved these ambitions.

6.5.2 Barriers impacting on progression to leadership

All participants were ambitious and successful women who became senior leaders in a sector where women are significantly under-represented. This study highlighted the impact of a range of mainly structural barriers which they encountered and presented a fourfold summary of responses. Further work might explore the intersectionality of gender and race/ethnicity on BME women's leadership experiences. Further research which explores this summary of responses more extensively might expose its potential to extend theoretical understandings of transition to leadership. Additionally, further research might demonstrate its potential to contribute to better understandings of women's under-representation within college senior leadership and to help shape timely interventions, because it is important for its future success that the FE sector takes advantage of all available talent within its leadership cohort.

6.5.3 Self-belief

One finding emerging from this research is the link between leadership ambition and self-belief in the accession and incumbency phases of career. Recent studies relating to the schools sector suggest similar links (Rhodes, 2012). Further work to explore this aspect of the findings could link to FE

leadership development strategies designed to nurture self-belief at key phases of career.

6.5.4 Governance

The literature review demonstrates how little is known about the race/ethnic and gender profile of governors who are responsible for the selection of principals and senior postholders. What evidence there is suggests that governing bodies are not representative of either college workforces, students or the general population in terms of both race/ethnicity (Ofsted, 2005; Network for Black Professionals, 2008) and gender (Lifelong Learning UK, 2008b; Women's Leadership Network, 2013). Governing bodies have overseen the appointment of a mainly white male cohort of principals in the twenty years since incorporation (Lifelong Learning UK, 2011b; Women's Leadership Network, 2012). The findings highlight difficult relationships between some participants and their governors, which for some constituted a barrier to progression to principalship. These emergent governance issues suggest firstly a need for further research into the appointment of governors, linked to diversity issues. Secondly, research into governors' relationships with college leaders, which seems to have been overlooked by researchers, would be of interest. Thirdly, researchers might explore the impact of the revised governor training which has recently been developed (Learning and Skills Improvement Service, 2012).

6.5.5 From studentship to leadership in FE

An emergent finding highlighted that several participants succeeded as students in FE, finding the culture and climate supportive. This was in stark contrast to some later experiences when participants joined colleges as members of staff. Diversity is both an empirical and a normative concept (Blackmore, 2006) and research is needed to promote better understandings of how difference works across the educational experience from studentship to leadership within FE.

6.6 FINAL CONCLUSION

In conducting this research, I have been aware of the duality of its importance in interpreting participants' experiences of leadership in the FE sector alongside making contribution to wider leadership discourses. The research questions led to findings which demonstrate that structural barriers formed the greatest impediment to participants' progression, contributing to the under-representation of both white and BME women in FE leadership. The narratives revealed how negative experiences caused some participants to abandon their leadership ambitions within colleges. However, the findings also reveal that support at critical phases of career can support agency, sustain self-belief and mitigate against barriers. The research has demonstrated that most of these white and BME women did not regard national leadership training, which does not embed diversity issues, as relevant. Policy makers might reflect on the conceptualisation and content of this training in the context of under-representation of both white and BME women in FE leadership.

The overarching aim in designing and conducting this study was to promote a more inclusive discourse within FE leadership which highlights and foregrounds the experiences of both white and BME women. It is evident from the research that, in a context where women are under-represented, FE leadership discourses should embrace the experiences of all leaders and aspiring leaders in the sector. The focus should be on 'the large, many windowed house of human culture as a whole' (Said, 1993 p312), because 'marginality is not…to be gloried in, it is to be brought to an end, so that more, not fewer, people can enjoy the benefits of what has for centuries been denied the victims of race, class or gender' (p314).

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